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STORIES OF SOME SHOTS

OR THE CHRONICLES OF A GRATIFIED GUNNER

BY

JAMES A. DRAIN

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Stories of Some Shoots

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STORIES OF SOME SHOOTS

OR

THE CHRONICLES OF A GRATIFIED GUNNER.

By JAMES A. DRAIN.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CHIEF TEMPTS ME.

THE way it began was thus: The three of us were talking comfortably one evening over our cigars, only mine was a pipe, when the question of duck-shooting arose.

Now I am duck daffy. That is to say, I would go almost any distance to get a crack at some good, high-flying ducks. I have gone some considerable number of miles, such as across the Continent, to try the quack-quack birds. Puget Sound, and the California Coast, Gulf of Mexico, Chesapeake Bay and a goodly number of points betwixt and between have echoed to the "come-and-get-it" voice of my shotgun, and resounded to the thwack of a hard-struck duck hitting the water on his way from the clouds—sometimes. There were other times when the duck went on to the place it had started for before I shot. But anyway I succeed in getting a sufficient number of them when I am where they are to make the game interesting.

The subject of ducks arose, I say, and the Chief, a Scotchman born, though a "bloomin' cosmopolite," said to me: "What you want to do, old man, is to come to Scotland and shoot ducks with me. I'll give you five hundred shots in a day at good, swift, high-flying mallards, coming to you over a forest and from a hill. Come next year, why don't you? (this was in the fall of 1910) and I will guarantee you a chance to kill your share of a thousand ducks."

Naturally, I sat up at the invitation. "Why," I gasped, "there is no place in Scotland where you can find ducks in such quantities as that! What the deuce do you mean? Of course, it's good of you to ask me to shoot with you, but when you talk about ducks in such numbers as that, you must be dreaming."

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"Not at all," laughed the Chief, his eyes twinkling compassionately upon me. "I expected to get a rise out of you on that, so I'm not surprised. You just come over, my boy, and I will deliver the goods."

The Colonel, who had been an interested but silent member of the party, spoke up at this point, as if he felt some of the incredulity which was still in my mind and was desirous, as he always is, of making easy the way to good sport for those who love it: "No, Jim, the Chief is not stringing you. He'll do what he says. He raises 'em by hand, and they're counted before as well as after shooting."

"What! *Tame* ducks!" I gasped. "Not on your life," responded the Scotchman. "If you can find any ducks in other places that take any more killing than mine, I shall be glad to hear of them, that's all. They are wild mallards and they will dodge shot as frequently as do their thick-feathered brethren the world over. You just come over next year and I'll show you."

"Well, Chief," I answered him, "I'm going to try to take you up on that offer. An experience of the kind you suggest would round out my duck shooting career in grand style. It would make anything I've ever done before this look like a penny ante poker game alongside of Wall Street's best efforts.

"I gather, of course, that these ducks will be your own property and that by shooting any number of them we shan't be depriving other sportsmen of an opportunity for their own good times. Wherever I have shot I have always lived up to the bag limit and I never have killed over fifty ducks in a day, though if I had hit all I have shot at I would have killed a few more than that on some occasions, I'll acknowledge. When I come to think of it I believe I have business in the British Isles next year, and the longer I consider the case the more convinced I become that that business is of such an imperative character that I shall be compelled to go abroad about—about—what time did you say the ducks would be ripe?"

"Well, from the middle to the latter part of October. But if you are coming you ought to get there earlier so you could have some deer stalking, and take a try at the grouse, black-cock, pheasants and partridges."

"You are raising the limit, old fellow," I said. "I would not give a hang to shoot a deer. I haven't shot one for a long time, though I

used to be rather gone on it. I haven't pointed a rifle at a deer since I lost my right hand ten years ago and I wouldn't walk across the street to kill a deer. But the birds—and especially those ducks—call to me. I surely will come if I can possibly arrange it. You let me know what the proper time will be and if it lies within the power of one James, plain American, to sail the blue seas, and land on Britain's shores to bust the ducks, I'll be there.

"By the way, what guns ought I to bring?"

"On that score, of course," returned my impending host, "you will have to suit yourself, but I should say as long as you have to shoot with one hand, you ought to bring two automatic shotguns. You will find three or four hundred shots a day from a twelve-gauge with a good heavy load a little trying, I imagine, if you fire them from a double gun. I'll look out for ammunition and furnish a loader for you and all that. All you need to bring is two automatic shotguns, your shooting clothes, and, of course, whatever rifle you prefer to use on the deer."

This was the beginning of it. The talk occurred in the winter of 1910 at my house in Washington, where the Colonel and the Chief were spending an evening with me.

You might have expected me to forget the conversation with its attendant invitation almost immediately—if you are crazy—otherwise you may be quite sure that sleeping or waking the thought of that suggested expedition was never quite out of my mind.

I planned and I hoped and I worked for it as a boy struggles to save his first money to get Fourth-of-July fireworks. I almost came to the point of feeling sure I would die before the time came around, much as I used to feel when I was a little shaver and counted the long months between me and Christmas. But nothing happened except good things. My business went along well, two or three new clients with reasonable retainers in their hands appeared as it were out of a clear sky, and by midsummer of 1911 dalliance with the ducks began to loom large in the fall foreground.

The Colonel and I used to talk it over together. He is one of the most sympathetic men I have ever known. He wanted to go, too, but it was impossible, so he took out his wishing in helping me get ready.

Letters came along from the Chief, judiciously dropped in every month or so, reminding me of the promise to come, remarking upon the word he had received from his head keeper of the health and prosperity of the birds and beasts. I finally settled upon September nine as the earliest date I could leave, and I decided to honor the new great liner, Olympic, with my presence for the voyage over.

Up to the very second the big ship was nursed out of her dock and headed down New York Bay to the Narrows by the fussy little tugs swarming around her like flies around a gray-hound, I was afraid that something would happen to make the trip impossible. But my luck held, and with a serene conscience and high hopes I headed for those ducks.

Most of you have sailed the blue seas over. An ocean voyage is no novelty to you, though very few as yet have had a chance to sail on such a ship as the Olympic. As long as a big city block, almost 900 feet, 45,000 tons or over, ten or eleven decks or so, with electric elevators, a swimming pool, and all of those luxurious appointments which the modern sea-traveler seems to require to make him forget that he is not ashore, the Olympic has. She is more like a great floating city hotel than a boat. I confess to liking the small ones better. You are nearer Old Ocean then and do not have to reconstruct your ideas to feel that you are afloat. This presupposes naturally that winds and waves do not disturb your internal economy to misery and revolt.

However, I have never been sea-sick—that is a straight statement and not a stock phrase—so that may account for my desire to be a little more at one with the water than is possible on a colossal ship like the Olympic. She is certainly a beauty, if you go in for big boats, and the voyage over, mostly spent on deck with the subterfuge of a deck chair and a book as a cloak for dreams of the days to come, made the time from New York to Plymouth slip along until almost before I knew it I was preparing to set foot on Albion's shore.

Sweet, soft, September days at sea; what can excel them? And then if you are fortunate enough to have in between, as I did, a good stormy day and night of driving winds and whipping spray and tumbling waves, you have just the background for serener enjoyment of the glorious sun, the smiling seas, the tingling, salt-tinged ozone, and the swift surge of old blood made new.

As I leaned over the rail high above the bobbing tender which was to take me ashore at Plymouth, a steward calling my name proved to be the bearer of a letter from the Highlands. In it the Chief said: "Waste no time. Come on as fast as steam will carry you to the deer forest of Benmore where I await you, and where the stags want shooting beyond all expression. You ought to need no telling, though you may, that Scotch deer forests are the best in the world and Benmore is not the worst of these. Hurry, hurry, hurry. The deer are plentiful, the grouse and the pheasants and the partridges are in abundance, and the ducks, though not so good as I could wish, will still, I believe, give you all the sport you can wish for. But of all things do not linger, because the season is now on, and each day of delay is a day wasted."

There were other things in the letter; what trains to take, where to have my traps sent and a crowning word which said: "Come quickly on; keen for the killing."

England's green fields and close-cropped hedges never seemed more fair to me, though the natives said the unparalleled dry season had taken something from that indescribable freshness of color inseparably associated in one's mind with the thought of the land of our British cousins.

London's roar was tuned to a more hearty welcome than ever, and though I have always loved the big city by the Thames, one could scarcely say I halted there. I merely hesitated on my way to Scotland, to greet my family and to make a few necessary purchases before I took the night express for Inverness.

In the small, though comfortable and quite cosy Scotch sleeping carriage I awoke early, and from my window caught my first welcome glimpse of the Scotch hills; the Highlands at last.

Scotland was a new land to me, or it should have been, but new it never seemed. I awoke and gazed forth, not a stranger in a strange land, but as one among familiar and longed for and well loved surroundings.

At Inverness I had breathing time and a breakfast hour before the branch train which was to take me farther into the hills could quite make up its mind to start. In the station hotel oat-meal "parritch," with real cream, bacon and eggs—real bacon—you know

the kind they have over there, marmalade, hot scones, and almost coffee, gave a foundation for the pipe which drew well and kept burning with an incense sweeter than ever was offered to the most glorious gods.

The British system of handling baggage without checks required me to look for my trunk, a large steamer trunk, it was, and though I had subsidized a porter to care for it, I made myself known to the station-master, a man of import here. Without doubt, to be station-master at Inverness is a dignified duty. Mackey, in high hat and frock coat, to whom my friend had written letters asking him to look out for me, was the station-master. He went gladly to supervise my preparations for departure. At the luggage van for a moment the trunk seemed to be lacking, but in response to Mackey's query the guard on the luggage van said, with that thick though pleasing Scotch burr which was soon to become so familiar to me: "Wull ye be meanin' the big Yankee box?" to which I answered: "Yes, a big Yankee box."

"Aye; uts here, all richt, safe an' soond an' labeled for Larrig." Lairg being the station at which I was to descend.

And here I pause overwhelmed by the impossibility of reproducing by any means within my power that Scotch dialect which is like to no other tongue in the world, and yet withal so fascinating in its quaintness.

Mackey saw me into the rear glass-bound compartment of a first-class car, bade me a good journey and good hunting and was away upon more important employment, and the little train was soon also away on its slow journey to the further Highlands.

Its way lay along Moray Firth, then by Cromarty Firth; by loch and over burn, winding and twisting and turning to follow the ebb of the sea until our sturdy little locomotive took the bit in its teeth, as might a shaggy Scotch pony, and made straight for the hills.

There is such a thing as Scotch mist. It may be you have heard of it. It might be called rain by some, but not by those who have known the Oregon mist or the soft, but "dry" rain of Puget Sound. 'Twixt gray and graceful showers the sun winked out smiling to think it had power enough to interpose a glimmer upon a day evidently intended by the All-Wise to be a misty one.

Upon the platforms of the frequent little stations the natives flocked in their Inverness capes or sturdy Scotch tweeds, with thick stockings of wool and low shoes, disdaining umbrellas and regardless of the rain, with here and there women of their kind under hoods and shawls and long hanging capes, and an occasional unmistakable Englishman, though these last for the most part were clad much as the Scotch.

It gave the proper human atmosphere to the places. It was all like coming to a well-remembered land, after a long absence, and yet there was in it the spice of the new; the possibilities of the unexpected lurked everywhere.

The train was a very slow one, but though I was in a hurry to arrive I did not seem to care for that, I was so much engrossed in all I saw, so keenly alive.

I saw parties of sportsmen, guns under arms, dogs at heel, in the turnip patches, and I wondered what they sought. Later I knew they were walking up partridges. I did it myself upon occasion, as I shall shortly say. I saw hills, rock-ribbed, bare, that frowned down upon the right of way as do our own mountains in the Rockies or Cascades.

I saw moss-grown, ivy-swathed, squat, low cottages, with thatches carefully bound; I saw conical ricks of oat straw, each capped with an individual thatch, carefully guyed down by ropes spread as are those which hold a circus tent. I saw sheep, and cattle and horses; more sheep than all. I saw little brown ponies between the shafts of two-wheeled carts. I saw farm carts, with a big brown single horse drawing them, a sturdy man and woman to the right and left walking by the animal's head.

I saw tow-headed children gazing with familiar interest at the going train. On, and over all, where the waters of the Firth lapped close to the ends of the sleepers, I saw a flock of ducks rise and circle and fly away.

I saw battleships and cruisers and torpedo boats of the British Navy, gray and sullen and threatening, lying at anchor in Cromarty Firth, which I had thought too small for any such warcraft, but it was large beyond their use.

Climbing, still climbing, we came a little after noon to Lairg, and I stepped down upon the graveled platform and went forward to see

my trunk, now for so long as I should stay abroad, a "box." That big, Yankee box, slipped gently from the van, and then the train steamed on into the mist and left me standing not far from one other passenger, and a lone porter. The other man was an Englishman more used to the ways of the country and besides in more haste than I, so he collared the porter first, while I waited.

With the luggage of the other man the porter crossed the track to the station building. I expected him to return, but he did not, so I went over and engaged the station-master in conversation. My instructions had been that a conveyance would await me at Lairg to take me to Benmore, said to be twenty odd miles up in the hills.

From the railway official, who was courtesy itself, I gained news of the motor, which stood humming outside the door. Luckily it was one with narrow and deep afterbody, a type which I was often to see in Scotland. One seat in front, and two facing inward for the full length of the afterbody, say five feet long, in the rear. Here my trunk and bag went and at a nod we were off.

Two miles by a winding road brought us to a white, immaculately white, inn which nestled like a snow-colored bird upon the shore of the blue and winding loch, curving between two high brown and green hills. Here I descended and having the "box" brought into a convenient room in the inn, swiftly changed into heavy shooting clothes. Twenty-eight miles even by motor through the mist and over the Highlands would be no joke for a man in light city clothes.

Finished changing, I found my way to the little low-ceiled dining room, where before a wide, small-paned window looking out upon the Loch I lunched, taking care to stow away, of the simple but good food offered, enough to carry me through my ride.

Then, with raincoat over all, dear old shooting cap pulled low over spectacled eyes, which would fog—but what was the difference—I climbed to my seat beside the driver, took one last look at the Sutherland Arms, white inn, nestling there, another at my "box" and bag, tarpaulin covered in the back of the car, touched a match to a fresh pipe, and we were off.

CHAPTER II.

BENMORE LODGE.

IT was up and down hill, mostly up, and the driver apologized for the bad roads. To me they seemed passably good, but then I am accustomed to American roads. There was not an inch of this way which was not made ground, broken stone, pounded hard and firm. There were little inequalities, of course, that could not be avoided, but on the whole, the entire road was one which in America would be called good. Alongside the way as we went, were road makers—who might have stepped bodily out of "A Window in Thrums" for my delectation—breaking the flints with hammers. Slow-moving, "deeleeberate," making every move count, and being mighty careful not to count too fast. These all seemed men past middle age.

As we went our way upward the country became rougher, more and more often a stone outcrop, and less and less frequent the trees. We came out at last upon rather high land which showed many a stone outcrop, was treeless, in places grass covered, in others grass and heathergrown, while peat hags glared.

Do you know what a peat hag is? I did not until I went to Scotland, but now I do. You know peat, of course; it is coal in its first stages; black, the product of hundreds, perhaps thousands of years of slow growth. Soft in places to the point of mushiness, it wears away by the action of the water and holes are gouged out of what looks like the solid ground—holes from a pin size to the diameter and depth of a biggish house, the walls of the cavity black.

And water—never except upon the ocean have I seen so much water. Burns roaring and tumbling and murmuring and trickling down the hills everywhere. Never out of the sound of a stream, and lochs of all sizes, forms and descriptions.

By a heather hill a covey of grouse are treading nervously on their toes drawing courage to stand fast within twenty yards as we roar

by. Over yonder three black cock, magnificent fellows, rear their heads and give a preliminary look before they whirl away. There, a hare, mate to the jack-rabbit at home, departing in leisurely fashion to some new spot; and in green banks, here and there, rabbits, hundreds of rabbits, popping in and out of burrows, like figures in a highly animated pantomime.

The old motor churned noisily and sturdily on, surely eating up the miles with a healthy hunger. I talked very little with the man who drove me. My eyes and my thoughts kept me busy. He spoke not at all, unless I addressed him, and seemed oblivious of my presence. But when I strove to light a pipe against the difficulties of the wind of our passage, he stopped without a word and took a match box from his own pocket to proffer me the lighted brand, which sufficed.

It was thus I had my first glimpse of that fine courtesy and gentle consideration for one's comfort which never thereafter was far from me while I was in Scotland.

The distance measure within told me we had come more than twenty-five miles, when, swinging a hill shoulder, I saw to the right a longish loch. Beyond it were mountains rising sharply; between its end and us two bridges crossing separate streams, the one a large flow of water which came from the foot of the loch, the other a small one which was quite near. As we drove upon the larger bridge I saw near where the loch stream had its source the figures of men, and as we approached one of these passed the rod he held to another and drew near. It was the Chief, a welcoming light in his eyes and a glad smile of greeting on his lips. The last time we had met had been at Quebec, in far Canada, and now we clasped hands again at the lower end of Loch Ailish at the foot of the Mount Benmore.

Greetings over he told me the day had been so misty that he, no guests being present, had cut deer stalking for the time and come to try the salmon. He had killed two fine fish, and was not ill-pleased with his day. To his question of what I would like to do, the time being then about four o'clock in the afternoon, I said, of course, "Anything you like."

"Well," he inquired, "how would it suit you to take a little walk,

that will let you stretch your legs after the cars, and you may get some meat for the pot. The Lodge is about two miles up, and you can work in that general direction."

I acquiesced, and declining the gun which one of the keepers offered I had my box taken out and from it drew one of my own guns, which was soon assembled, and I was ready for my first try at the Scottish grouse. The Chief called "Sandy," a gray-haired and stooped gillie, to go with me.

The minute I stepped off the road I encountered one of those new sensations so soon to be multiplied during my Highland visit. What looked like firm grass land *was* real grass, with about two inches of moss at its roots, and then from two to six inches of water. Chug, chug, swish; not always over the shoe tops, but soon that and sometimes more. Of course, we were on the low ground, but I found even the tops of many grass-grown hills had this mushy, marshy formation not unlike the tundra one encounters in Alaska.

The first grouse I found got up rather wildly and I lost him, and another one or two. I was not in good form and I found the cartridges given me would not cause my automatic to function, because with the recoil ring on they did not develop enough power. And so splashing through an occasional burn, which meant nothing after my feet and legs were wet, occasionally getting a shot and picking up a few birds, the grouse being much like our own prairie chicken, only more swift in flight, I came to the top of a hill, and looked down upon the lights of Benmore Lodge, just kindled and twinkling welcome.

Here I found my host already returned from his fishing. The lodge, a long, low, comfortable building, made no pretensions to beauty, but it lacked nothing necessary to comfort. Good beds, good baths, spacious lounging room with an open peat fire, comfortable easy chairs in plenty and well trained servants to supply all one might require, were there.

Dinner was at eight. I expected good plain camp fare, but I found a well-appointed table, with spotless linen, good glass and china, where the two of us were served by a butler in livery in a style quite equal to that one could expect to encounter in town. Nor were the dishes offered any whit less appetizing than one would order with an unlimited purse and wholesale opportunities.

From the table, with fragrant cigars glowing, the Chief and I made our way back to the rest room, where in long chairs before the fire the talk gradually veered around to deer stalking. I remember I offered this, when my host said I should stalk on the morrow: "Why, I told you in America that I had not shot a deer for a long time, that I really did not care to shoot one again. I'll be glad enough to go along with you and watch you shoot, but it doesn't seem worth while for me to try; besides, I think it would be rather a difficult matter for me to hit a deer anyway with one hand."

The Chief would scarcely hear me out. "You will go out tomorrow and stalk, young man. It is what you are here for. After you've tried it for two days if you find you don't like it I'll let you off. But mark you, I say, unless I am very much mistaken, deer stalking is going to appeal to you mightily."

Curious to me now is the retrospect, as I look back at the mental image I had of what deer stalking would be. I rather expected that I should be taken to some convenient runway and seated there while numerous beaters would drive the deer past me. I saw myself seated on a comfortable camp chair, smoking a cigar, singling out the likeliest stag in the herd and then—and here I was quite true to myself as I saw the situation—I saw myself firing with all the care of which I was capable, and with not too much concern observe the deer go on untouched. Later on, as my narrative of events will disclose, it became apparent that much which I contemplated was a mirage and that the country from which it sprung was far removed from the land of real Scotch deer stalking.

I recall that I said to my host on this first night: "Now, this is a new game to me. If I am to play it I want you to tell me how. Are there any rules?"

"Few rules," said the Chief, sententiously, "but golden rules: First of them; always walk three paces behind your stalker." (I had only a dim idea of what a stalker was, but I did not expose my ignorance by speaking). "Always," said he, I remember, "walk three paces behind your stalker. Suit your movements to his. If he stops, you stop; if he goes on, you go on; if he bends low, you bend low; if he gets down and crawls, you get down and crawl. Do just as he does unless he motions you or tells you to do something else. That is golden

rule number one. Number two is, don't shoot anybody, not even yourself. And that's all."

"Of course, there are other rules, but they will have to be borne in upon you by precept, example and practice. No one can tell them to you. If you are a duffer you never can learn them in a thousand years, but if you are born to be a deer stalker they will seem part of your nature before you have seen the last of Benmore." I had to be content with this, and with the thought that I had a rather large and vague contract before me, I turned in with the promise that I should be called when it was time for me to get up.

CHAPTER III.

MY FIRST STALK.

ALBERT, the butler and general handy man—that man could do anything from serving a dinner to acting as loader, with running a motor car for sauce between—bringing hot water and a cup of tea, and laying out my shooting clothes on the chair beside my bed, wakened me next morning at an hour which my watch said was seven o'clock. I turned out and quickly tubbed and shaved in an atmosphere which in spite of the open fire merrily burning in my grate was reminiscent of November days in the high hills of Colorado. The sun was shining, but as I took a look from my window at the mountains I saw signs which made me believe there might be something doing in the weather way later on. I was right. There was.

At breakfast, the Chief said: "You will go with Donald this morning." I answered, "All right." That was all. *Where* I would go with Donald, *what* Donald *would do with me, what* I would do for *myself,* were questions which I did not ask I left events to speak for themselves. Subsequently, as will be disclosed, they spoke, and in no uncertain terms.

After breakfast my host told me he was going in another direction from me to stalk in some absolutely unpronounceable place. When the All-Wise Creator made all things, he did, I suppose, either create or authorize the creation of Gaelic. Devout Scotchmen and Irishmen think so. There are others who believe the Devil had a hand in it. The place the Chief said he was going to sounded something like "Alton-Gallagher." That is what it sounded like to me. What it looked like when you spelled it was something altogether different, quite another thing, entirely.

I made many a noble resolve while I was in Scotland to learn the names of at least a few of the most familiar spots I visited. The Gaelic names, I mean. But I was too busy doing other things. Besides that I only have one brain, and I early discovered that overtaxing this delicate member is an evidence of lack of quality in that same brain structure.

Whenever I spoke of a place with a Gaelic name I just hit the high places. I called it "Umph-umph ump-glumph" or something like that.

You should have heard me trying to describe one of my stalks the night after I had made it. I believe the Chief would have broken a blood vessel if I had not grown so angry at his stupid lack of comprehension. As it was, he laughed until the rafters rang again.

Well, anyhow, when he said he was going to "What-you-may-call-it" I thought I might as well mosey out and see if I could find Donald. As soon as I stepped from the threshhold, into the sunshine, a gray-eyed, clean-cut young Scotchman moved toward me, and touching his cap, said: "The General wull be going wi' me."

"Is your name Donald?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then," I answered, "Go ahead; I'm ready. But where's my rifle and who has my ammunition?"

"I have them, sir," said he. We walked on down from the lodge by the stables where some ponies were standing. They call them ponies, but some of them were pretty fair sized horses. Anyway, they were Scotch ponies. They were bridled and had saddles upon their backs, and one was pointed out to me—afterwards discovered to be the Chief's own—as the one I should mount. I climbed up into the comfortable old McClellan saddle which graced this barrel-bodied and faithful beast, and following in the footsteps of Donald, who moved off on foot, I made my start upon my first stalk in the Highlands.

Donald swung along at a good four miles an hour. I had to put my pony, which was a slow walker, into an occasional trot, to keep up with him. Passing through the gate which marked the limit of the lodge grounds proper I saw back of us two more ponies with a man at the head of each, following after. Donald carried my rifle, a Ross

.280, in a full-length black soft leather scabbard. The rifle was mine, but the scabbard was not. We followed a winding well-made path by the burnside, skirting the edges of high hills with peaks looming over all in the near distance.

The sun shone brightly down, harbinger of happy days in the deer forest of Benmore for the Yankee sportsman who had come so far to taste the quality of Scottish bird shooting and then against his will had been forced to stalk the deer.

Scots are silent men; few words suffice for them, especially where strangers are concerned, and only the rub of saddle leather, the rattle of stones beneath hoofs and nail shod shoes broke in upon the water sounds, which the Highlands always offer. From the roaring rush of a big burn over its rock-strewn way to the thin tinkle of the tiny rill hurrying on to join its big brother, in these hills one need never, in fact, one cannot ever—unless he be deaf—get out of the sound of the music of the waters to which all songs of Mountain Scotland must be written, if they ring true.

By the pathside, moss everywhere—gray and bronze-brown and green and gray-black and gray-green and yellow and purple, forms a resting place for baby buttercups, golden-eyed and sweet, neath heather-bells swinging in time to the heart-throbs of the fairies.

All the herbage has colors to delight. Here is a gully; its sides black as ink; peat. There another browny-red; granite. In their bottoms it may be a burn—a foot or fifty feet wide. Tip-topmost of all the hills in front of us Benmore (Highest Hill) the loftiest peak in Sutherlandshire; flanking it, serrated ridges almost as high, cameo-cut against the blue, their crests cloud-wrapped and hidden this moment, the veil rent and their nakedness staring the next.

A stern, strange, hard, beautiful, mild, rough, fine, coarse land. Not one for weak men or silly women. A place to breed sturdy sons and sterling daughters. High Lands indeed. And by their height nearer to the Source of All.

From the first little hill looking backward through gently eddying blue pipe smoke, I glimpsed Loch Ailish, where it lay a beautiful blue jewel in its emerald-colored, brown overlaid setting, at its upper edge the lodge, gray-sided and red-roofed, stern and forbidding on the outside as are these hills—if one only looks for outer things—but with the warmth of a real welcome for who should pass within.

I had not thought any place or time or situation could fill me with so deep, so strong, so pure and unadulterated a happiness. I looked upon the view below, and I gloried. I gazed on the other hand and saw the mountains before me to be scaled, and I gloried. It was good to be alive. At the moment a few gentle raindrops fell. It was as if the high hills had said: "We baptize you thus to be brother on probation with us. If you prove yourself worthy you shall be full brother."

It did me good to see Donald walk. There was no effort. He moved on like a beautiful machine. One glance was enough to tell me that he could keep to that gait all day and all night if need be, up hill and down dale. It is a grand thing to be a good walker and thus be prepared to take out one's spite on all man's mechanical contrivances conceived to carry one places.

Winding on, my eyes drinking up the good sights to see, my ears losing no beautiful sound, my imagination full of the real atmosphere of the place, and my mind absorbed in it, far from all thoughts of deer or deer stalking, I saw Donald step aside upon a heather mound, and unfasten the case of the long telescope which hung at his left side suspended by a strap over the other shoulder.

Seeing him prepare to look, I reached for my field glasses that I might also see what there was to be seen. Donald, sitting down upon a little hillock, extended the telescope to its length, thrust the native wood cane he carried into the ground for a 'scope-rest, and looked at the slope of a hill perhaps a mile and a half to our left front.

When I had fixed my glasses upon the same spot there leaped into view in their circle, it might be fifty deer, feeding, lying down, or moving peacefully about. Donald said nothing; nor did I. To get a better look I started to descend from my saddle. One of the gillies was instantly forward at my bridle rein. I, too, sat down upon the hillside and looked long and intently at the distant deer. They were unaware of us or oblivious of our presence at that distance and we could gaze as long as we chose. Donald said nothing; I said nothing. Five minutes passed; ten, maybe, then he slowly, deliberately closed his glass, section by section, and with a thoughtful air slipped it back into its case; contemplatively he pulled the cap over the end thereof and buckled it; then he rose, quite slowly, to

his feet and said in a low voice: "I'm thinkin' there's na shootable staug in that lot, sir," and passed on. I silently mounted and followed.

Soon the trail began to zig-zag up a sharp slope which formed the side of a peaked mountain. Part way up, at a good vantage point, Donald stopped and repeated the performance with the telescope. Later on I found this was called "spying"; a perfectly satisfactory name, it is, too. While I sat on my pony, mildly wondering what would come next, he went back and talked to his two companions, the gillies, who accompanied us.

As they stood with their heads close together talking in low tones, the rumbling of their murmured conversation punctuated at almost regular intervals with interrogative grunts, "huh, humph," might have marked them as conspirators plotting the most fiendish crime. But Donald was merely laying out the plan for the day. Leaving them, he came back to me and said, pointing up toward the summit of the mountain: "We'll be walkin' up there, sir."

I promptly got down out of the saddle and fell in the prescribed three paces to the rear of Donald. One of the gillies swung in behind me, the other took charge of the three ponies and started for a sheltered place further down the hill. The wind was blowing on the spine of the mountain, and one could easily get very cold when standing still. I soon acquired the knowledge that one could just as easily become very warm while walking.

I had on heavy shoes, fortunately hobnailed, heavy woolen underclothing, a thick flannel shirt, close knit woolen stockings, pulled over a pair of woolen socks, and a Burberry near-waterproof shooting suit over all.

The mountainside rose steeply; where it was not rough with broken stone it was slippery with peat hags. I was soft from the week aboard ship and the idleness of a railway journey. We had not traveled very far until I found there was difficulty in filling my lungs with a sufficient amount of air to keep me going forward. Steadily Donald moved upward. I remembered the golden rule to keep three paces behind him and though I found it hard, I made up my mind I would die upon the mountainside rather than fall back or cry for mercy.

You understand that when we commenced to walk we left the path and assailed the slope where there was no made way. Fine, noble, rocky peaks and ridges rose before us. Ridge on ridge and terrace on terrace quite as massive as any high mountain ranges I have ever seen.

At intervals—they seemed very long intervals—Donald would stop and again spy. At such times, while I had the energy, I reached around and took my own faithful Warner and Swasey binoculars from their case at my hip and looked in the direction toward which I saw his 'scope pointed.

On the low ground as we got higher I picked up a number of deer at a distance. Each time after a pause, so short that it seemed to me we had scarcely stopped before we started on again, the upward movement continued. At one of these stops I looked back at the three ponies huddled together with the attendant gillie at their heads. Not again during all the hard, gruelling first day of stalking should I see those faithful burden bearers, though of this I was unaware at the moment, which was quite as well.

Over the sharp and loosely flung rocks of every size, across grassy slopes wet and slippery, through peat hags dug deep in the yielding turf, upward and yet upward we toiled. At any rate, I toiled. My leader's slender gray-green clad legs seemed as insensate and invincible to fatigue as steel springs. My heavy shoes, too new for comfort, were stiff and punished me cruelly. It was grievous labor.

I lost my first wind; reached and with falterings grabbed my second; lost that in turn and groped for my third. It was not there, and ever and ever the top seemed further away. I dared not look at it, because the distance seemed to increase instead of lessen at each glance. All I could do was fix my burning gaze on Donald's nether extremities and follow on.

CHAPTER IV.

ELUSIVE STAGS.

WHEN at last we reached the top my legs were as wabbly as if they were filled with water, and the labored breaths I drew seemed to me as noisefully come by as those of a wind-broken horse. Now I was warm; more than warm. I was hot under my heavy clothing after this strenuous climb, but a moment after we topped the crest emerging fairly into the embrace of a blast of such wintry temperature that it carried with it stinging little particles of sleet, I felt myself as cold as Shackleton when he prodded round so close to the South Pole.

The freezing wind went through me like sharpened icicles, and in a few minutes I was shivering. In the storm it was impossible to spy for deer, and Donald, no doubt, struck with compassion for my pitiable state moved to the partial shelter of a little dip in the top and here with my back to the wind I fought with my discomfort, recalling for my heartening, the hours of agony I had known in my first essays in other days, before lungs had a chance to expand and muscles to harden to the hard tasks of hill and mountain.

The gillie from the rear came up to Donald when we stopped and another whispered conversation ensued. I should say it was half an hour or more we waited in that windswept space, though it seemed hours to me. At length my stalker came to me saying as he pointed almost into the teeth of the wind and toward the far slope of the mountain: "There's a shootable staug doon there, sir, but I'm thinkin' we canna' get at him. We'll just go doon here, sir."

"Doon here" was the slope of the mountain to our right, where it went, I should say, 2,000 feet, steeply, oh, very steeply, down to the shore of a loch, whose waters looked black where the wind had not spun the wave crest into spindrift white as snow.

The slope was a grassy one, as steep as the roof of a house, almost as sheer a drop as the side of a house, in fact. Underneath the grass

was water and slippery earth. On top of it water and slithering sleet. I congratulated myself on the forethought, almost inspiration, as I was ignorant of the country, which had given hob nails to my shoes. Slide and creep and slide we went down, down, down to the bottom of it.

On the more level land at the foot of the sharp slope, peat hags and rocks, and every gully held a burn and every burn full of wet, wet water. At the lower level the sleet was rain. The wind ripped and roared, its velocity always high, its direction changing in the wink of an eye a quarter way round the compass. Bad stalking weather, to be sure, for one could never tell when a beast might catch our wind.

Now there came four or five miles of muck, muck, climb and slide, and trudge and wade, through broken ground, mostly across the wind, then finally we swung around until it blew squarely in our faces—when it did not change its mind and switch us from the sides.

In all this tramp no word was spoken. Occasionally Donald would stop to spy, but it was not much use. His glass would fog although he nursed it carefully under a big red handerchief, and I had long since giving up trying to spy anything for myself through my glasses.

Suddenly Donald stopped. So did I. He motioned me forward with an inviting forefinger. When I came up, wondering what was toward, he said in a husky voice but in accents of greatest respect:

"Wad the General be after having lunch noo?" The General would, and said so.

There was an especially nasty peat hag near, and in the lee of its further side there seemed some possible shelter. Donald tore up some handfuls of heather and placed them upon the stark, black mud, and here, with my back to the wall I sat down, while the gillie coming up spread upon my knees the contents of the canvas haversack which he carried.

I was greeted upon assuming a sitting posture by one small but vigorous and extremely frigid stream of water, probably dirty, which gushed from the overhanging bank above my head and gaily coursed its way down my spinal column. I was so wet before that that a little water made not much difference, and I merely leaned forward sufficiently until the stream cleared my collar and hit me in the middle of the back.

Then to the lunch which, praise be, was good. Sandwiches of fresh bread and sweet butter, cold breast of grouse, scones spread with raspberry jam, sponge cake with raisins, and last, but lisp it not least, a Perier waterbottle full of Scotch whiskey. The men sat about twenty feet from me in the partial shelter of another hag and discussed a frugal lunch which they drew from their pockets.

A habit acquired of old when the hills had called me, asserted itself, and I ate and drank sparingly. Finished, I called Donald to me and gave him what was left, the larger part of my lunch, and then with numbed fingers I got out the wet pipe and damp tobacco. Fortunately my pouch was rubber and only a little water had trickled through its upper opening, and with matches taken from a dilapidated box I managed after many efforts to get a light.

The reviving effects of the food and the tobacco were soon apparent, and in fifteen minutes or so I called to Donald that I was ready to go on whenever he was. He came to my side then and pointing over my head into the wind, which swirled and shrilled past us, half-whispered: "There's a goot staug over yon, sir. I'm thinkin' we'll be stalkin' him," to which I responded, "Whatever you say, Donald."

And so straight into the wind, while the rain blurred my shooting glasses, we went for the (to me) invisible stag. For a quarter of a mile we went, for half a mile, three-quarters, a mile. Much of this time my leader was bending low, half doubled to the ground. I did the same. We took advantage of cover. We followed up burns, sometimes wading them, sometimes stepping from stone to stone. At last we passed the full width of the lower ground and came to the flank of the mountain upon whose top we had earlier stood, but beyond the place of first climbing.

Here instead of a grassy slope were rocky faces, some of them almost perpendicular, where the only way up was by clinging to crevices and along cracks. Without pause or explanation Donald started up. I after him, the gillie following me as always. And now came a truly heart-breaking climb, while the wind whipping around the shoulder of the steep faces threatened to throw us bodily into the abyss below, which gradually became more and more of an abyss as we moved higher.

I suffered in this climb, but old ways and the training of years began to assert themselves, and though my muscles stiffened until they cracked every time I paused for a moment, I felt a reserve behind which I knew would help me to the top.

And to the top I went, from which, in a lull of the storm, looking down we saw, or rather Donald saw first and pointed out to me, the deer we were pursuing. I remember just how they sprang into the object glass as I searched for them in the lower ground.

I picked up, as I swung the glass slowly over the field, white rocks, gray and black rocks, brown heather and green, red brown grass near peat hags, and at last as if they had sprung at me, three stags not over a thousand yards away, where they stood surrounded by twenty or thirty hinds. Fine fellows they were, too, much larger than I expected to see. Noble, antlered heads and strong, clean-cut bodies above shapely legs.

For the first time, impelled thereto by the labor I had performed I commenced to feel rising within me a desire to kill one of those stags, and I said to myself, "If I ever get close enough to one of you fellows the only reason I shall not kill you will be because I can't shoot well enough to hit you!"

Retiring from the lookout place until a break in the spur hid us, we commenced a downward movement, still on the dangerous rock face. From the moment we began the descending stalk we were out of sight of the deer and would continue so until working up a ravine which lay at the foot of the range, we should, if all went well, come close enough for a shot.

But all did not go well. The wind whipped and whirled about, blowing first from this way and that. I saw Donald shaking his head and I guessed that he feared the deer would catch our wind. It was so, because after infinite labor when we at last reached the point from which a shot might be possible we saw nothing in the place where the deer had stood at our last look. And only after some minutes of searching with the glasses was I able to pick them out, a mile and more beyond.

After a long, long look through his glass, Donald, saying not one word, commenced to move upward again, now in a third and new place. We had lunched at two o'clock; it was late afternoon now and

the gillie was called up while the stalker gave him some more of those confidential instructions. This time I caught the word "ponies" and a movement of the hand in the direction where the ponies were supposed to be.

The gillie left us, while we, climbing two-thirds of the way to the summit came into that same old bitter course, crossed and left it, and made our way around the mountain which brought us out at a vantage point looking down on a large valley (Scotch "corrie") spread below us. There were deer in it, but none in suitable places for a stalk. Then on a long slant we started back toward the path. When we reached its smooth surface again, darkness had fallen. Donald questioned: "Would the General wait here while I go back and get the ponies?" I said no. We would walk in. And we did.

It was four miles to the Lodge and the path which had seemed smooth grew strangely rough with loose rocks that rolled under the feet, and the four places where we had to cross burns by precarious stepping stones loomed ominously before me. But we walked in.

Oh, the scent of the peat smoke, when after we topped the last rise, the Lodge yard fence appeared dimly before us! Sweet savor to the nostrils was that peat smoke. I knew it meant a hot bath and dry clothes and good food and rest and sleep; and then the twinkling lights. Just a little way more and we were in.

I did it and I could have gone further if I had had to, but I am very glad I did not have to. This was my first day of Scotch deer stalking and you will say it was a hard one. So did I, but it was worth all the labor it cost, even though I had not fired a shot; even though I had toiled and struggled until I thought I should fall from sheer weariness. Men's best rewards are sometimes indirect ones. Conquering obstacles, overcoming the weaknesses of the flesh and fighting old Mother Nature in her strongholds are activities to give any man satisfaction who has a drop of fighting blood in his body.

I knew I had not acquitted myself ill in the eyes of my guide, and I chuckled to myself when I saw the light of understanding in my host's eyes as I told him it had been a good day and that deer stalking was a great game, and I meant it. I had commenced to glimpse the possibilities of what now appears to me to be one of the grandest sports a man can indulge in.

CHAPTER V.

I GET A SHOT.

THE physiologies used to tell me when I went to school the number of bones in the human body. I've forgotten the exact count, as the scientific sharps made it, but I venture the statement that every single, solitary one of my bones—and I felt as if there were at least a thousand,—ached in its own individual and peculiar style, when Albert called me for my second day's stalk.

Honestly I believe my getting out of bed sounded like the swinging of a barn door on extra rusty hinges. But I made it somehow, and afterwards crowded puffed and aching feet into unyielding shoes, that once large, seemed grown as diminutive as Cinderella's own. Don't make any mistake; they didn't *look* like Cinderella's slippers. They just *felt* that way. Not that the shoes were small, but the feet were large.

I got out to the pony, of course after breakfast, and after two or three essays, into the saddle. The personnel of the party was the same as the day before. Our path the same. As I rode and felt the warming rays of the morning sun beating upon my back I gradually felt a little better, but when we came to the same old spot where the dismount had been made the day before there were very few muscles in my body which did not cry aloud as I began my trudge up the hill, the established three paces behind Donald.

But, blessed be the scheme of things which gives compensation, and vouchsafes accommodation on the part of mankind to all and various necessities! As I walked and grew warm I ceased to hurt here and there and I won the crest with much less labor than the day before. It was not altogether easy, but there was a plain gain. Of course the stalker had stopped to spy from convenient points as we went up, and at the top he told me there was a chance to stalk a stag which lay further on and below us. I said as before, "Whatever you say. You lead and I will follow."

It was not a long stalk. Not over two miles and the ground was not too rough, though I promise you it was no tennis court surface we traversed. I had not been shown the deer, and I was utterly in the dark as to where we were going; all I could do was to follow my leader and model my movements upon his.

We finally came to a very sloping spot where the grass was short and wet (it had been raining, though at that moment there was a lull) which slanted very steeply to a rock edge which broke off into space. From the extreme caution with which Donald made his way down this face I knew that he not only considered it a hazardous one on account of the chances of a fall, but also that he expected to see game when he crawled to the edge and peered over. I lay flat behind him with all the tense immobility of a frozen pointer, until he motioned me up, with a small movement of the hand by his side.

When my head came to a level with his he pointed over the edge of the rock to a point below. Looking down from the ledge there was a sheer drop of perhaps 250 feet. Some little distance out from the base of the cliff, feeding quietly in a little meadow, were half a dozen deer, among them a very fair-sized stag.

Donald intimated to me in hoarse whispers that I was to shoot at the stag. In the meantime the gillie crawling down behind me had taken hold of my feet. I was glad he had. As I lay, my head was easily three feet lower than my feet; and it was only by holding back hard, that I was able to keep from slipping over the edge. And now the stag was headed toward us, and wishing for a broadside shot I must wait.

Then the mist came down and turned into rain. More waiting, more wetting, and increased cold. Finally there came a break in the watery curtains and the stag was seen feeding broadside on. In a straight line from the muzzle of my rifle to the beast was, as near as I could guess, 200 yards, and Donald said 200 yards, so that was probably about right. I knew I was likely to overshoot on a down hill shot, and so I held for the lower edge of the body behind the front leg and with the best and steadiest pull I could get under the circumstances, cut loose.

It was not a very satisfactory shot. My position was too insecure. I was too cold and uncomfortable to do my best, but at that I think

I would have hit the stag if I had not been shooting with a rifle with strange sights. The rifle itself, although a familiar model, was a new one. I will tell you how that was after I explain what took place when the rifle cracked.

At first I thought I had hit my mark, because the spurt of mud seemed below the level of the stag's back, and he squatted slightly, suggesting the giving downward of the back which a deer always shows when he has been hit in the body. The feeling that I had overshot was verified by Donald, who said quickly: "Juist over him, juist over him."

The deer hesitated for a few seconds before he sprang away. I might have tried another shot, but I was too disheartened to attempt it.

I was not feeling very gay over my performance, as you can imagine, and I felt for an instant ashamed before my stalker, also I was dreading what he might say in criticism. But this was not that sort of man. Never did anyone find more quickly good and sufficient reasons for missing than Donald found for me then. "The position was a bad 'un," he said. "And 'tis verra, verra hard to shoot when one iss so cauld; and the light was bad."

I appreciated it all, but you know how I felt toward myself, and you can imagine what my feelings were for Donald. It was so with him always. Through sheerest love of fair play and wishing to give me good sport, he always found the best of excuses for my mistakes and the highest praise for every reasonably good thing I did.

About the rifle, the situation was this: I had bought a Ross .280 before I left this country and I had fallen madly in love with it. Its high muzzle velocity of 3,050 feet per second gave such a flat trajectory that up to 400 yards one need not worry about elevation if shooting at deer. The recoil was of no consequence; the piece balanced like a well built shotgun.

I could manipulate the bolt with my one hand very readily and the rifle shot where I held it, and besides, it carried a sharp, hollow copper-pointed bullet cartridge which for killing effect seemed almost incredibly capable. But, as so often happens, another man wanted the gun and I let him have it, relying upon the Ross people being able to send me another of the same model to Scotland for such incidental uses as I would require of a rifle. Remember, at the time,

I did not have deer stalking in my mind as a very serious or desirable occupation.

The rifle came, and it was all that I desired in every way except sighting. The rear sight, open and of the V variety, was made as Britishers generally desire their open sights, broad at the top and tapering to the bottom, so that to get normal ranging qualities one had to put the front sight in the bottom of the V.

I have spent a good deal of my life in teaching men to do good and consistent shooting with the open sight by putting the top of the front sight on a level with the top of the V. That means a relatively narrow V or a U, and a shallow one. I had just two shots from my new Ross before I fired it at deer. I knew that I had to get that front sight in the bottom of the V, but it was a mighty hard thing for me to do. I had to sight and then think about it every time I got actually sighted and ready to pull, and look more than once before I could be actually sure that I was not aiming too high.

Of course, I did not say any of these things to Donald, or even to myself at the time. I just said nothing to the men, and to myself, "A miss, confound you, a miss." But I drew back from the edge of the drop as soon as I could to where I could relax my strained muscles and take a good, long breath. The deer moved on, but not having seen us, they did not go above a mile.

Donald led me on another stalk; this time not a very difficult one, and we came out on a reasonable ledge to see my stag at about 250 yards lying down, head toward me. I knew I could not hit him in that position, so I waited for him to get up. We were well hidden; the wind was blowing straight from the deer to us, and there was little chance of their being frightened, and yet, of course, the wind might change.

By now I was becoming very anxious to kill this deer. I felt a personal grudge against him. I wanted to take it out of his hide. I wanted, in short, to kill him, and dip my hands in his blood. I was savage and there was no mistake about it. I felt entitled to a deer, anyway. I conceived I had earned one, and as far as I was concerned, as long as it was up to me I proposed to get one—if I could.

Maybe it was a little fault in the wind, perhaps something else caused the alarm, anyway the deer—as I lay watching them, growing colder and colder every minute, my clothes being wet and the ground still more so,—took fright, stood up quickly and commenced to move off. This threw my stag practically broadside on, and I took a quick shot at him. I made up my mind I would not over-shoot this time and I did not.

At the sound of the gun he sprung what looked like ten feet straight up into the air and then was away like a whirlwind. I knew what I had done, and when we got to the place where he had stood I proved myself to have been right in my conjecture. There was a nice little bunch of hair—about the size of the nub you have seen your sister or some other lady roll up after she had been performing the morning operation with her crowning glory—the size of a walnut, I should say. Not even a piece of hide attached to it. I had just cut a nice little groove across the under side of my stag's breast. In this case as in the other, Donald made excuses. He said the shot was hard; said it was a hazardous one; he remarked again that it was "verra hard to shoot when ane war sae cauld." In brief the fine fellow made every excuse he could think of to explain my poor shooting. I told him the truth. I just missed, that was all.

Through the glasses the deer seemed not so frightened after they had gotten half a mile away from us, and they finally settled and went to feeding again,—all but the one I had shot at,—a little over a mile further along the mountain side.

We stalked again, and once more successfully. This time my beast was lying in a little gully practically 200 yards away on a hillside just as near the color of a deer as anything I ever saw. I could just see his horns above the heather. I had to lie and wait for him to get up. I waited and I waited. The sun was rapidly going down. I was wet through; I had been warm from the stalk and I grew cold, very cold.

Also I grew angry at that deer and more eager to kill him with every passing second. Finally he rose hurriedly and started up the hill, not quite but almost broadside on. I swung the muzzle of the rifle with him and intended to wait until I was absolutely sure and then plug him where it would do him the most harm. But I did not.

For as I swung, against my will and for absolutely no cause whatsoever, without intention and just through sheer idiocy I gave the trigger a jerk; *whang* went the gun and I'll bet you the bullet didn't go within twenty feet of him.

What was to be said? Nothing, absolutely nothing. The stupidity of it did its own talking. But Donald again said the shot was one easily missed.

It was too dark to try another stalk, even if the stag had not gone out of range, which he had, so we turned back toward the path, and so on home again.

I was tired on this night, but not so much so as the night before. The stalking had cut down the number of miles traveled very materially. As I parted from Donald by the Lodge door, taking the rifle from him to throw out the cartridges from the magazine before I let it go to the gun room to be cleaned, I said:

"Well, Donald, yesterday it wasn't your fault or my fault, it was the deer's fault. Today it wasn't your fault or the deer's fault, it was my fault." To which the faithful fellow answered,, "A, weel, 'twas verra hard shootin', sir; verra hard. Ye'll have better luck soon."

I told the Chief all about it after dinner that night, with no attempt to varnish up the weak places. I informed him that I had fired three shots at a stag and missed, except for one tiny bunch of hair which nobody could eat, and which was useless as a trophy. He also tried to comfort me, by saying the shooting was extremely difficult, the conditions strange and new, and he cited cases of some of the best shots he had known, men who had proven their skill upon ranges where the champions of the world competed, who, when they tried the Scotch deer, found themselves in the novice class and among the "also rans."

It is true that the background against which the Scotch stag is usually found when you try to shoot him is so difficult that at 200 yards eyes of ordinary quality experience great difficulty in finding the line where the stag ends and the background begins. When you look at the fellow through the sights he becomes extremely vague and indefinite. However, as I told the Chief, I thought even better of deer stalking as a game than I did on the first day, and that I had made up my mind to kill a stag if I possibly could.

CHAPTER VI.

A DAY WITH THE CHIEF.

THE next day we took a motor in the morning and with the Chief at the helm spun and swished and swung around the winding hill road to another side of the forest.

Of course you understand that to call it a "forest" is about as sensible as to style it a lake. There is no forest. Of the whole 55,000 acres making up the Benmore deer forest there is not over ten acres of trees. These are stunted little fellows, and only grow on the lower ground.

We descended from the motor and started up what proved to be about a six-mile climb to the summit of a great rock dike. At first the slope was extremely gradual. In fact we climbed two or three foot hills and went down into valleys between. Then we had a rather stiff contest with a fairish slope thickly set with soft heather. After that a broken rocky slant to the top.

Even so soon though, my muscles had commenced to do their work better, and I found the climb finished with none of those acute symptoms of distress of the first day. The view from the top was worth a dozen climbs—yes, a hundred.

So far away that it seemed in another world, as I gazed toward the west, there swung, seemingly 'twixt earth and sky, a great turquoise in which a little black center floated. It was the sea and an island in it, off the west coast of Scotland. Proud peaks with bold but handsome faces lifted their heads on three sides. Burns wound silvering down through gorse-clad glens and by craggy faces. Little lochs and large lay scattered about in the valleys' floors, like children's beautiful toys cast carelessly there by a youngling giant.

It seemed as though I had been upon these peaks before and loved them. Had I cared less I could say more. What man can describe the face of the Dearest Girl, though all may try?

There was to me in those Highland summits not alone the rare pleasure of conquest through sturdy labor; there was an elevation above sordid and commonplace and ordinary things. A freedom and a liberty, a glad, high joyousness which was worth crossing all the seas to feel.

There is not any use trying to convey to you the impression which the hills of Scotland made upon me. Go for yourself and see and feel. If they are for you and you for them you will know what I mean. If not it would be a waste of time to try to tell you.

I saw ptarmigan again this day. Not pure white as yet, though they will be so later in the season. Fine, swift-flying birds. It would be great sport to go for them with a shotgun, because they live only on the heights and rocky, stern, places are their choice. I never saw one in the grass or anywhere except in the broken, rocky tops. They are about the size of a grouse, perhaps a little smaller, but they fly differently. They use their wings more as a pigeon does.

It was very broken ground on this top. Nature had here evidently passed through the severest convulsions. Great dikes of rock would loom before us and apparently cut off further progress, but there were ways around. Donald was not leading us this day, but "Danny," Danny Mackay, the head stalker. Danny looked frail. He had a thin face, his cheeks were not very full, though his eyes were bright. But he had legs so long that it seemed to me he could, like the historic character in vaudeville, button his trousers to his collor button if he wished. The way he could move over rough ground and the speed at which he navigated upon those legs was almost paralyzing. He never seemed to tire, and he could cover the worst ground as fast as most of us move upon the level.

It was not until after lunch that Danny spied deer where he thought we might stalk. Then after moving over some reasonably rough ground, he stopped near the edge of the great rock dike and came back to the Chief, who had been following three paces in his rear, while I had maintained that distance to keep third place and a gillie followed me, after an equal interval.

Danny spoke for a few moments in whispers to my friend, who came back to me and with some concern said: "The place where Danny is going to stalk now is probably the most difficult in the forest. It

is extremely dangerous ground. I don't want you to feel any embarrassment in declining to go with us, because it is a hard enough place for a man with two hands."

I said; "Can I get a look at what it is like?"

"Yes," he replied. "Come to the edge here."

It did look rather nasty. There were rock faces which could only be passed by crevice clinging and working along around shoulders which lay up above falls sufficient in magnitude to guarantee them quite a drop too much.

I had come to the Highlands without enthusiasm, more to please my friend than for any other reason, but already they had cast a spell upon me. I loved them. They seemed to me familiar, tried and trusty friends. Anything they had to offer, either a successful climb or a slip and a fall that would put a period to further physical activities was theirs to offer and mine to accept.

I whispered to the Chief, "*You* can make it, can't you?" He answered "Yes." "All right then," said I: "if you can do it, I can. Go ahead."

It was a goodish piece of rock and grass work; sometimes feet first, sometimes head on, always with the greatest care to avoid rolling loose stones down which would disturb the deer, but without mishap or accident of any kind we came at the very last to the place from where we were to shoot.

There was a little cup-like depression in which we lay and rested for a few moments before crawling up to the edge. As we did so the Chief said to the head stalker: "Danny, will the General find many worse places than that in Scotland?" and Danny, shaking his head, said: "Na, I dinna think so." And then the Chief—"How many gentlemen, Danny, do you think, of those you know, would attempt a stalk down a face like that?"

"Weel, I'm thinkin' aboot ha' of 'em wad decline it, Chief," answered the lanky Scotchman.

When we were all steadied, we crept to the edge and amongst twenty-five or thirty deer, distant about 200 yards, about half of these yards being straight down, my intended victim was pointed out. I was as steady as a rock. I took plenty of time. I picked the lower line of the body of my stag just behind the foreleg. I never had

a better or more perfect pull-off in my life, but I'll be hanged if I thought about the necessity for getting that front sight down into the very bottom of the V, and the consequence was—once more, just over.

The Chief fired after I had done my worst and broke the back of his beast, a fine stag which afterward dressed over 200 pounds. But you could not spoil my temper that way. The climb and the stalk, the feeling of new and vigorous life that was crowding all through me, made me a hard man to make angry. There was so much good in the worst of what I was getting, that it was impossible to make me complain.

We made the climb down the balance of the cliff and the men attended to the stag, which they then dragged over to the pony path, and down this we walked the six miles which intervened between us and the Lodge.

That night at dinner the Chief said to me; "I have to motor down to the Castle tomorrow (this meant fifty-eight miles to his home estate). It is Friday. You can come with me if you like, spend Sunday comfortably at the Castle and then take part in a grouse drive to which a friend of mine has invited you for Monday. We can come back Tuesday and stalk again Wednesday. Or you can stay here if you like, and stalk tomorrow, Saturday. If you do that I shall probably come back Sunday night. Of course we do no shooting here on Sunday, nor fishing. My Scotchmen are very devout and believe in respecting the Sabbath. You do just what you like."

I decided to stay, rather than lose three days of stalking. The incident was typical of my host's attitude toward me. I suppose, being eternal, these hills were here before his ancestors, but not long before, I imagine, for the land upon which sits the Lodge at the head of Loch Ailish, has been in his family for more than seven hundred years. There are, as I have said, about 55,000 acres in the Benmore deer forest. I judge this to be measured around its boundaries, but as I said to the Chief one night, I suspect there are close to 200,000 acres, if you measure both sides of the hills; so many of them sit up edgewise.

The Chief has other deer forests and grouse moors; several, I don't know how many; and his holdings in Scottish and English lands

amount to over 300,000 acres. He is a baronet, but that does not seem to bother him. His titles, or his lands, or his natural great intelligence have not served to make him other than the most gracious host and thoroughgoing sportsman companion of any man I ever knew, except one.

He forgot nothing while I was with him which might add to my comfort and happiness, and yet there never was the slightest display of burdensome, intensive hospitality which one sometimes encounters. His style of entertaining was the happiest blending of the best form of American guest carefulness and that somewhat disconcerting British ultra-freedom of action. To me the Chief proved a most intensely interesting and congenial companion. He has globe trotted with the best, China, India and the far isles of the East have known him. He served with distinction as a volunteer in the last passage of arms between the British and the Boers. He has shot game, big and little, in most places where shooting is to be had. He is alert of mind and facile of hand; inventing, perfecting, manufacturing and offering to the world the children of his brain and ten fingers.

He is as much at home in a machine shop as in a drawing room, and withal a true sportsmen in every fiber of his being. Finding himself at his majority land poor, with a far-sightedness and good sense which do him infinite credit, he abandoned the career of a soldier for which he had been educated and in which he would most certainly have shone, and undertook to rehabilitate the fortunes of his house. This undertaking has met with conspicuous success.

I like him, and it pleases me to be able to say pleasant things about him. The pleasure he gave me during my Scotch experiences could not be measured in human emotions, nor paid for in any coin of God or man.

I saw the Chief away in his trim little "Fiat" and then with Danny, head stalker, he of the legs, you remember, in another car we ran over the same ground as the morning before and took the same climb.

But now my legs commenced to know me as their master, and my lungs and heart complained not of the strain put upon them. There was much rain this day, as Danny and I went on to the top. It was cold and I felt the cold, but I gloried in it, and in my strength to stand the walk against the wind, and beat it back and push it aside. I shook my head in the teeth of the gale and dared it to come on.

Old Mother Nature was doing her work and as usual slighting nothing. Having punished me in the early hours of my intimate contact with her in her stronghold she was now paying me back for being a good boy and taking my medicine without unseemly whimpering.

You can imagine by this time how keen I had grown on the subject of shooting a stag. Everybody had been so nice about my misses—and you will recall they were now four—explaining them away and excusing me, that I felt that it was absolutely up to me to show them that I was not a complete dub, and that I could kill at least one stag. So I hunted hard this Saturday morning, and Danny, feeling my desire, gave his whole heart to completing a successful stalk.

We made several trials but the wind was shifty and four different times we came to where we expected to see the deer within shooting distance to find them awav.

Late in the afternoon, after many fruitless attempts, we stalked up a corrie (big gulch) with walls so steep and high it was morally certain a deer could not climb them without extra effort. But when we completed the stalk and came to the vantage point Mr. Stag was gone. Vanished as if into air. We never did find out how he escaped without attracting our attention.

Now it was dark or near it, and we made for the path to strike it at a point which would be about seven miles from the Lodge. Here we found the ponies waiting, but no ponies for me on this night. I walked on ahead, alone, and covered every inch of it at a good swinging four miles an hour, trotting sometimes on the downhill places.

The path went around by the big burn, and across little ones. The moon came out over the jagged hills and painted misty and weird pictures, as only the moon, master artist of the mysterious, can. I drank up the sweet, fresh, night air, in great deep breaths. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for the opportunities, the fresh chances, He had given me; for His merciful kindness in letting me live; for His forgiveness of my many shortcomings and weaknesses; for His generous and considerate permission just to be alive, and be able to feel as I felt.

CHAPTER VII.

"HE'S A DEAD 'UN."

I DINED in solitary state that night, the butler serving me with all the formal care which he might have bestowed upon a host of distinguished guests, and I went early to bed where I slept with exceeding great satisfaction and restful comfort, until eight o'clock of a Sunday morning.

When I rung my bell and when Albert came, I designated in a few crisp sentences my desire for some oatmeal porridge and cream, bacon and eggs, buttered toast, marmalade, and coffee, on a tray in my bed. And I got them, and I ate them, and I went straightway to sleep again, and I slept until full twelve o' the clock, noon. Then I rose full of the joy of life, and, bathed and shaved and clean-clad in fresh clothes, had my mid-day meal and then sat in sweet content before the leaping fire on the rest room hearth, and smoked and dreamed. And just before sunset I walked down the road, thinking I might meet the Chief motoring in.

It was a beautiful way I traveled down the good road by the side of the Loch. I was so comfortable in mind and body I could almost feel myself purr like a cat. I thought of the new game which I was playing, one I had never tried. Shooting deer in the Rocky Mountains and elsewhere I had pursued them was quite a different sport. I had shot the lesser and the greater game in many spots, but this stalking of the Scottish stag, Monarch of the Highlands, was as much a journey into undiscovered country as was Columbus' first voyage into the mysterious West.

Other men care for new trails, to sail upon uncharted seas; to explore the unknown, and so did I. So I was happy and content. I said to myself if be my good fortune to get a stag, well and good. If not, I shall not bemoan my fate or growl at my luck.

Long, long ago I learned that the sportsman who puts the bag first is very poorly served by fortune in sports afield. To me, I mused, the creatures I pursue and their capture are incidental to my pleasure. I gather my joy from the contact with Nature.

I reap the rarest pleasure from admission to kinship with the great forces of Life, which the high, and the wild, and the rugged outdoor places always bring to the man who has enough of the primitive human in him to be sometimes natural. So in love with myself and my surroundings I continued on, through the peaceful evening scenes by which my way lay.

Shortly I heard the hum of a motor in the distance, and soon around a curve into sight slipped the car of the Chief. In a twinkling the swift-moving vehicle was abreast of me and stopped. From it descended to shake my hand in greeting, a second guest, the Captain, who came to stalk for two or three days. I declined the offer of a lift and strolled back by the way I had come.

The scene had a rare beauty all its own. On my left the Loch, painted black with the shades of evening; on my right, undulating grass-covered hills, rising somberly to blend with the night sky. The finely graveled road beneath my feet gave my eyes freedom to linger on the saw-toothed ridges and high, curious carven mountains which rose dimly as to bases, and clearly as to crests in my far front.

A little island in mid-loch with feathery branches of small trees showing, looked not larger than a parlor rug, and yet seemed great enough to hold a multitude of eerie night spirits, hungering for the moment of their release, to be gone upon friendly, harmless night revels.

The way ran around the long folds of the hill in graceful curves until, uncovered by the last, the twinkling lights of the Lodge danced into view, and down the glen was wafted the pungent taint of peat smoke, evermore to be coupled in my mind with the day's end, and rest well earned.

Up the now familiar path traveled on the first day, I tramped in high spirits behind Donald, on this the fifth day of my stalk, the tramping and the climbing of the week before, followed by a day of perfect rest, gave what could be expected, a freshness, a vim, a zest, a hunger for the hills, an appetite for exercise and a keenness to kill.

It was a delicious morning. The sun shone warmly on my back as I swung along, the ponies ignominiously relegated to the rear. I reveled in the crispness of the air, the music of the burn's down-rush was sweet to my ear beyond expression. Nor were there any terrors for me in the big mountain ahead. Step for step after my sturdy stalker I covered the zig-zag path to the point where on the first day I had dismounted from my pony to commence the strenuous climb up the hill.

Today I was already on foot and quite willing, indeed anxious, for some stiff uphill work. But we were not going to attempt the mountain again just now, for at the white stone spy spot, now grown an old friend, Donald sat down as usual to spy. I noticed that he looked longer at the right front than anywhere else and I tried my field glasses for some time in that direction.

His gaze seemed to be directed upon a wide plateau which stretched from the foot of the hillside upon which we sat for four or five miles, in a general northerly direction. I saw nothing on all this grassland which even faintly resembled deer, so, after a rather cursory sweeping of the glasses across it, I turned to the valley in which lay Loch Ailish, sparkling and scintillating in the morning sun, and nearer the red roof of the Lodge its blue smoke curling above, while like overgrown daisies showed the white sheep dotting the green of the Lodge enclosure.

Hearing a low murmur of voices, I took my eyes from the glasses to see the gillie, now seated alongside of Donald with his telescope fixed upon the same point toward which the stalker looked. I sat patiently waiting, knowing that I should have whatever information I was entitled to when the proper time came. I had filled and lighted my pipe and I was quite content to sit in that salubrious sunshine absorbing the serene happiness of the hour, careless of the future, but pleasantly thrilled by the thought of what might be in store.

Donald's lean forefinger was perfectly steady as he pointed toward the spot upon which his glass had been directed, and his voice betrayed no excitement, but I caught a gleam in his eye as he said: "There's a shootable staug over yon, sir, and the wind is na' sae bad, but the groond is verra bad. I'm thinkin' 'twull be a long and deeficult stalk, sir."

"Well," I replied, "I don't mind that. Whatever you say, Donald. You're in command. All I have to do is to follow you, obey orders, and fire my salute when the time comes. But I warn you before we start not to bring me within range of a stag unless you want that particular beast killed, because I've a notion that any shot I fire today is going to mean meat for the camp."

Donald had a sense of humor. He smiled a broad smile, as he said: "Weel, we'll juist gang on, sir."

For a moment I did not know whether he intended to move away from the deer or toward them, but I was reassured when he said: "Maybe ye'd like to see them before we start? Look doon the hill from where the sharp notch on the skyline over yon twa mile and a ha', is in line wi' the white stane and the verra furthermoist peat hag, and ye'll see them lyin'. The staug is furthest frae us."

By dint of much searching and by virtue of my good glasses I finally picked up the deer. I judged them to be at least two miles from us in an air line. They were upon the gentle slope of a grassy table-land which inclined toward Glen Muick and us. Searching out the ground on all sides of them it did not seem to me possible they could be stalked. It was hard ground indeed, but as Donald had observed, the wind was right, because it blew from them almost directly toward us.

Down the hill we went, taking long strides and making famous headway. As soon as we were a hundred yards from the spying place, the deer were out of sight. It was not long before the notch in the hill and everything else except the grassland in front of us had disappeared. I wondered how well Donald could orient himself and I watched with close attention.

We had to make detour after detour to avoid rough and boggy places or to cross obstructions, but he always swung back to that general direction which seemed the right one to me.

This grassy meadow was like the one I encountered when I first tried the grouse. It had water underneath and the walking was not easy. We were going quickly and were soon in a fine glow. After a time we came into a little gully, that ran around the hill at right angles to the course we had been pursuing. Up this we started. Its sides were peat and in its bottom a little burn, the walls of it six or

seven feet high, where we entered them, though it grew more shallow as we went up it.

But now Donald was moving with the greatest care, and I likewise of course, as I imitated his every movement. He stopped, turned half way about, and moving his hand downward, I saw that he intended me to stop. When he perceived that I understood his sign he slipped up over the edge of the bank in the direction I knew the deer to be and wriggled his way snakewise out of sight. The gillie and I leaned against the black bank and waited.

Five minutes later, moving with no sound, and so close to the earth as a man could flatten himself, Donald was back again to the gully, and slipping to my side. His eyes were alight with the spirit of the chase, as he leaned close to my ear to whisper: "They're juist a bit way on, sir; the staug is lyin' doon, safe enoo. From yon bit hillock (and he pointed to a little rounded mound close by, not over eight inches above the surrounding surface). I think ye can ha' a shot, if they dinna fricht, at a hunner an' ninety yard."

I gave him back "All right" and my tongue began to dry in my mouth. Ah, but I was keen to get that stag! No more did I feel a disinclination to kill a deer. I had done my dole; I was entitled to a deer, and I intended to get him—if I could.

With the greatest caution we worked our way to the point Donald had designated, and here between the grass stems which were high enough to rear their tops above my head as I lay there, I had my first close glimpse of a Scotch stag and his lady kind, the hinds. He looked a fine figure of a deer as he reposed at ease, his nose pointed straight toward me; his gallant antlers springing from his broad brow like young trees.

As we made our last advance Donald had slipped the rifle from its case and now began to slide it along the ground toward me. I grasped it and cautiously thrust the blue muzzle through the grass stalks, settling myself as I had thought to fire, if I had time for such a maneuver, with my field glass case for a partial rest, as I knew the impossibility of a right arm without a hand upon it being sufficient to sustain the rifle while I fired. But alas and alack-a-day! When I looked along the sights all I could see before me was grass. Not a glimpse of the stag. The rifle was too low.

While I was debating whether to move for a better position or what to do, the stag, apprised of our presence by some instinct, or a waft of wind, sprang up quickly, and as he did so the rifle muzzle rose with him. His legs were scarcely straight as he gained his feet when my left forefinger moved, and the shot rang out.

Trying afterward to get the position from which I had fired, I found it was one I had conceived impossible. Firing from the left shoulder as I must, resting both elbows upon the ground, the end of my right arm was supporting the rifle by touching the stock back of the trigger guard.

At the shot the deer gave down in the back. I was too engrossed in watching him to think of opening my bolt and sending him the contents of another cartridge. As I gazed intent with expectation and desire, keyed to the highest point, I saw him move forward, half a dozen staggering steps, and I whispered to Donald: "Will he do, will he do?"—and Donald as tense and as interested as I, replied: "He's a dead 'un." Even as the last whispered words came to me the stag wavered for a moment and then fell headlong and lay without a quiver.

The six or seven hinds had dashed away at the shot, but they were still in sight. I had drawn in enough knowledge of the requirements of the situation in a deer forest to know we ought not to show ourselves until the hinds were out of sight, so we lay quiet. I did work my bolt, then, and covered the stag for fear he might rise and make off. But the hinds having passed from view we moved over to the old fellow and found him quite dead. The bullet had struck him about four inches below the backbone and about three inches to the rear of a perpendicular line passing through the heart.

I had killed my first Scotch stag.

The attentions which he required from the men were soon paid him; a little cross of his fresh blood was marked upon my brow, and then Donald and the gillie, with ropes which they drew forth for the purpose started to drag the body to the burnside at a point where the pony could be brought to get him.

Donald was quite as happy over the successful outcome of the stalk as I. Indeed I think more so. I came to love this honest fellow before we parted. He was as genuine a sportsman as I have ever known.

His joy in the chase was conspicuously real. He had as much taste for the pursuit as a well bred hunting dog, and probably with as much reason, as his fathers before him for generations had been huntsmen and stalkers.

My stag had a very fair, though not unusual head. Nine points, and he weighed dressed, fourteen stone nine, or 205 pounds. He was in excellent condition; as fat as butter. When we had him where the pony could be easily brought to him, the pipes came forth and we sat down for a bit to talk it over.

Donald had by this time decided that he could talk to me without fear of being misunderstood. He did not now, and in fact he rarely ever did begin a conversation, but when I gave him an opening he was from this hour willing to converse with considerable freedom.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO AT ONE STALK.

BACK from the point where the dead stag lay we moved to our spy place of the morning, and from thence up the old mountain face again, where I had gone on my original climb.

But, oh, what a difference today! I was at the top almost before I knew it, and quite willing to start on at once. We lunched upon the mountain top in a little sheltered place where the wind missed us and the sun shone brightly, close by a little crystal rill, which burst from the shattered rock face and gave us water for our whiskey— if we needed it.

And then began one of the most extended stalks of my Scotch experience. From the top of the mountain a good stag was located in the lower ground in a direction opposite to that where the kill of the morning had been made. We stalked down for this fellow. He was gone. We picked him up after a while in the distance and stalked him there. He had moved on.

In the great pocket of the hills in which we were working the winds were utterly unreliable, and blew this, that and the other way, spoiling our chances over and over. I remember one time during this afternoon that we stalked down a glen which had a fine, big burn in the bottom of it, and in this burn the stalking was done. Sometimes in icy water above the knees, at other moments stepping from slippery stone to slippery stone as far as the legs would reach; crawling along by banks, wriggling over gravelly bars, and what was to be the final stage of a hundred yards or so, snake-wise, stomach on the ground through water seeping up through the moss from one to six inches deep, and at the end of it some hinds between us and the stag took fright and he was up and away before I could get my gun out of its case.

Night finally came upon us and some eight miles from the Lodge I took the path and made off for home. When I got in the Chief and

the Captain had already arrived. The Chief had killed a good stag, the Captain one more. They had gone together in another direction from that which I had taken. It was not hard to find topics of conversation that night. The stags of this and other days had their lives and deaths recounted.

I thought I should have dreamed of deer all night long, but the moment my head touched the pillow, or just after, there was Albert with the hot water, and another day had come.

And now I spent a day on the moors, walking up grouse. A tall, slow, broad-shouldered, black browed gillie, by name John McIntyre went with me. John was supposed to know where the grouse were lying, but between us 'twas little enough information he had upon that point. He had a deer stalker's instinct, though a slow fellow, and every chance he got was spent spying for stags on the further hills, though we were outside of the forest proper.

But we had a fine day with an occasional grouse; enough for sport's sake; a black cock or two and one mallard duck, that got up behind me from a little burn hole not much bigger than a bandbox. I surely had no complaint of that day. The sun shone for most of the time, and the occasional showers only emphasized the hours when they were absent. It made a good change from the stalking.

The next day I was to stalk with the Chief in quite a new direction. I heard the winds shrieking around the Lodge when I awoke and by the time breakfast was over, looking out of the rest room window toward the Loch, one might have been pardoned for thinking the gale was going to blow it dry. The air was so full of water it seemed to move in solid sheets.

Another guest had come the night before, Lord B——. I dubbed him the Warrior, and he and the Captain, after finding every excuse imaginable, from the necessity of re-hobnailing shoes to writing important business letters, finally took the trail for their appointed stalks. The Chief and I *actually* had some things to do but we stretched them out rather than face the blast. At last in sheer shame we could wait no longer.

In one way it was good luck that the deer in the Sanctuary were in sight of us as we came up the burn, for after topping the ridge about two hundred of them were seen, and the Chief felt that in

view of the character of the day we had better go back than run the chance of frightening this lot out of the forest altogether.

The Sanctuary probably carries a good deal of its purpose of being to your mind by its name. It was a certain portion of the forest well toward the center where the deer were never to be shot, to which they could flee when fired upon and from which, on no account were they to be frightened. You can see how necessary such a place would be. Otherwise if deer were shot all over the place without regard to the preservation of the stock it would only be a little time until there would be nothing more to shoot.

To preserve a deer forest after it has been established is a task which requires much knowledge and patience. To a certain extent the fact that all the country round about, immediately adjacent to the forest, is also divided into shooting grounds where deer are hunted is a help, because the animals can find safety only in places set aside and maintained for the purpose. Then an occasional owner places a line fence, sometimes one which is deer tight; and that is liable to make trouble.

In any event great care is always used in the way one shoots; for instance—both because it is felt the deer ought to have a chance, and for the reason that many shots close together would have a tendency to over-frighten the deer,—two, or at the outside, three shots at any one animal are the limit. No hinds are ever shot except where the forest is overstocked with female deer or when the hinds are undesirable for breeding purposes. The younger stags are also immune, except those that bid fair to grow up into unlikely sires.

A deer forest such as that upon which we were shooting would ordinarily lease for 2,500 guineas, or practically $12,500 per year. In addition to this sum a tenant would have to pay the stalkers and gillies and defray from his own pocket numerous incidental expenses. You can see that the sportsman who has a deer forest by ownership or lease is prepared to pay well for his fun. As far as I am concerned I cannot see where he could get more real sport at the price.

The Captain and the Warrior came in rather draggled earlier than usual, after having been unable to get a shot.

I went into Corrie Comblaureau—or something like that—the next day. I give you my word for it, if my life were forfeit I could not

spell nor pronounce the name of that particular corrie, although I could go to it and all round it in the dark and never miss a peat hag or fail to fall over a single boulder.

Shades of all those who knew the windy Kansas plains at their best, how the wind did wind this day! And the rain riot and the sleet sting. Whew! it was a fierce day, and so cold on the upper heights that standing still meant the shivers in about two shakes of an active stag's tail.

I had gone up with an old stalker named Sandy, now mostly displaced from the higher grade to the rank of gillie, through certain dimness of perception and lack of skill, combined result of advancing age and too many long looks upon the bottle, and with Sandy I fought the tempest in pursuit of a likely stag from early morning until two o'clock, practically without pause.

The wind was a difficult one to deal with and the ground extremely rough and troublesome to navigate. We made several stalks which seemed to me unwisely planned and not well carried out, having grown to some knowledge of the game after being with Donald and Danny.

Very greatly to my surprise, I must confess, after negotiating a grassy slope which was so steep that we had to go down flatwise clinging with all our strength, Sandy brought me out on a little rocky ledge from which he pointed to the deer feeding in the lee of the cliff about 200 yards away, in a straight line from where I lay.

I had no trouble in distinguishing the stag we had been pursuing among this lot of some twenty and I saw what appeared to be two good sized stags. I whispered to Sandy, as we looked over with one eye only; "Are those other two stags shootable ones?" and when he answered yes, I questioned "If I shoot the large one shall I shoot the second if I can?"

"Yes," said Sandy, "shoot all three of them if the General wishes." But I thought I detected a hint of hesitation in his tone, and besides that it seemed to me two stags would be enough, if I could get two; which I might, if lucky enough to place my first bullet where I wanted it. I had a fairly good position for a shot, but the wind was fearfully strong. I took my time; held until I felt quite sure, and I was absolutely certain that the front sight was in the bottom of the V.

Then I gave the final squeeze to the trigger and my second Scotch stag was out of action.

This fellow never moved an inch. Just fell over dead, shot through the body a short distance back of the heart, a little high. That tiny .280 hollow point, copper tube bullet had done its work. Later when I examined this stag I found the point where the bullet had entered impossible of discovery from the outside, except by investigation conducted with a sharp lead pencil, but there was no such difficulty encountered in finding the traces of the missile on the other side; the one farthest from me when I shot. There a hole which you could scarcely cover with the palm of your hand with the fingers extended, marked not where the bullet had gone out, but where the explosive effect of that copper tube missile had worked its destructive way.

It is a most enlightening thing to see how these little bullets would set up explosive action inside of the body of a beast in a way to make one think a small dynamite cartridge had taken the place of the bullet.

Well, anyway, the stag fell at the shot, and the other two shootable ones, not being quite sure of where the enemy lay, started directly toward me, running at a good gait. They came but a short distance and then turned to enter a ravine which ran up the hill to the right. As they turned I let shot number two go at the larger of them.

The bullet hit him as he was in the air. He partly turned before he struck the ground and instead of landing on his feet he landed on his shoulder, his legs having doubled under him. Then he slid a little way down the hill, and swung while sliding until he commenced to roll over and over and over down a rock slide, not fetching up until he had slid and rolled a hundred feet.

He too, never kicked, being stone dead, apparently, from the moment the shot struck him. The bullet had gone in about the center of the body just back of the heart. The third stag running up the hill, had to be in sight for perhaps another fifty yards. I swung the rifle on him, and then said to myself, "Oh, two stags at one stalk are certainly enough for any man;" and I did not fire.

After Sandy and Duncan, the gillie who was with us that day, had given the necessary attention to the stags, we sat down about half past two and ate our lunch. It was then that the fiercest storm of

the day came on. The wind must easily have reached fifty miles an hour, and the sleet which it brought with it was so fiercely driven that all one could do was to sit tight, with back toward the gale and wish for it to cease. It passed in time, or rather lessened, because the hailstorm continued for two hours or more, I think, but I was not caring much.

We went down the hill to the flat by the Loch side and from there to the trail, and the men with the ponies returned for the deer, while I went on to the Lodge alone, getting in a little past five o'clock. I was feeling a little more "comfy" in my mind about this time over my shooting, and found nothing to complain of in the rough weather, which I had been bucking since early morning. The two stags had respectively nine and six points; one of them weighed fourteen stone eight; the other fourteen stone six. Good sized deer, as you see, each over 200 pounds.

There is a considerable diversity, of course. in the color of coat worn by these highland gentlemen, but in general appearance the deer suggests our white tail. Some were red brown and some were gray, but that is true of deer everywhere I have found them. They vary in color.

There was a gray stag I met in the Highlands—oh, but that belongs to another day's stalk and you shall hear about it later.

CHAPTER IX.

"A GRAN' SHOT!"

WELL, I had vacation on the day following my successful interview with the two stags on the windy hillside. There was no let-up in the program of wind and rain, but I met it on a different level this time, because I went out on the moors for grouse and black cock.

We had a good day of shooting; not a big bag, I think about twenty brace all told fell to my shooting partner and myself. Among the birds were several black cock, magnificently plumaged individuals, whose dark green, almost black feathers had the irridescence of peacock copper. We had a pointer and a setter, but they did not work very well. A retriever was of more use; he succeeded in finding our down birds without difficulty.

We encountered a few rabbits during the day and my companion disposed of all that moved within range of him. It was different with me. I missed those fortunate individuals which broke cover in my vicinity with a regularity as consistent as it was annoying. I had not shot rabbits since they formed my chief quarry in the Middle West during my boyhood, and had lost the knack. I discovered later that the reason I was missing was because I was too slow, and as the further and related cause I was stopping the gun in its swing just before I pulled the trigger. Naturally I shot behind the bunnies exactly enough to miss them.

The next day was Saturday. The Admiral had come to take the place of the Captain, and the Man of the Sea stayed to stalk while the Chief, the Warrior and I, well wrapped up to resist the chill wind which still came, rain-laden, boarded the little "Fiat" for a run to Balnagown Castle, fifty-eight miles away.

We spun along right merrily for about eighteen miles and for my part I was so glad and comfortable that I lifted up my voice in song, harking back to coon shouts I had known and old college choruses.

Fortunately there were few natives within hearing and the sheep did not seem to care. Perhaps a sheep has a fine ear for good music anyway, or possibly it is just simply patience. Perhaps it is as well that the real reason for the complacency of the sheep within sound of my singing is undiscoverable.

Just as we slipped down a long smooth hill near the lodge gates of a fine country place practically eighteen miles from the starting point, the engine, which had been showing some signs of an internal disorder, decided that it had done enough for the moment and quit.

We had already made some sacrifices to placate this demon of the motor, or at least I had, for just after we left the enclosure of Benmore, curling smoke advising an absence of water in the radiator also disclosed a condition of poverty with regard to any vessel with which to bring and pour the aqueous fluid, easily available otherwise from the nearest burn.

I was wearing a Yankee hat of close, firm felt, and I offered it up upon the altar of necessity as a water vessel. It served its purpose well, but it came back to my head a shade on the damp side. The Chief was rather petulant with the motor, but he gave no expression in words to what he felt. He only said, "Well, just wait here until the other car comes and change to that. Alec (the chauffeur) can put this thing in order and come on after us."

The following car arrived in a few moments and we transferred to her, thence on over a pleasant road through varied scenery for perhaps fifteen miles more in this motor, when it, too, exhibited unmistakable signs of overheating. Once more the hat was requisitioned. Over a stone wall by the side of the road the nearest water was, a little pool in a cow pasture, and the fluid which it contained was not overly clean.

We formed a fire brigade on the spot. The Warrior over the wall filled the hat with water and brought it to me. I carried it to the car where the Chief poured from the hat into the steaming radiator. There was a great deal of mud in this water and by the time we had succeeded in satisfying the thirst of the motor my hat presented rather a sorry spectacle of soiled and pulpy felt.

Campbell, the head keeper, came to my rescue with a hat from his kit. It was one of those little cloth affairs which make one look like

the best clown in a first class circus, but it promised to protect the top of my head for the thirty-odd miles yet to go. About this time the Fiat came on, purring away like a comfortable cat. The Chief's decision was instantly made; we re-transferred and were soon well on our way again.

As we came to the low ground the hills flattened out; prosperous farms were passed, and characteristic Scotch villages were encountered.

The Chief has a real knack with a car. He gets as much out of one as anybody possibly could, but the difficulty with the Fiat was too deeply seated for quick or easy removal. The car had been run some thousands of miles during a use which covered five years. The feed pipes were clogged and nothing except a thorough and slow process of cleaning would make them right.

About twenty miles from our last stop the engine commenced to hesitate and sputter, necessitating attention and nursing. It would go on in a perfectly undisturbed way until we felt quite sure that all trouble had passed, then in a twinkling would come the rickety, rackety exhaust which meant trouble.

When we swung in at the dignified and age-tinted lodge gates of Balnagown, after coming up a lane by the high dark wall which marked the limit of the estate upon this side, a plump and rubicund old woman in clean cap and spotless white apron ran at the sound of the horn to unbar the portals and let us in. As we passed she bobbed a curtsey which was of a piece with her face, her garments and the gate. If she had not made this gesture I would have known something to be vitally wrong.

Up the graveled drive, between lordly trees we spun to swing in a big circle up to the Castle entrance. A fine old building, my host's home. Its most ancient part built over seven hundred years ago, with sections pieced on as succeeding members of the family felt called upon to change or improve.

We were just in time for luncheon; and the welcome of the charming lady wife of the Chief, and other feminine members of the family, together with the quiet, though real luxury of this genuinely fine old countryseat, were very agreeable. We rested here at ease until the next afternoon when we motored back to Benmore for further active investigations on the subject of the Scotch stag.

Before the drive was over night shut down, and as the car clawed its slippery way into the higher hills the familiar rain greeted us. The dash of the wet drops in my face was a caress. It was like the "Glad to see you back again!" of one who has waited for and welcomes your return.

The next morning with Donald for my pilot, I started upon a long trudge toward Corrie Vattie; the gillies and the ponies were ready, but I left it to the men to ride if they would. As for me I preferred to walk. We went along the now quite familiar trail, zig-zagged up over Stone End, dipped down to the level of the plateau beyond and then up and down to the upper reaches of the preserve.

From spying points we saw deer, but nothing which appealed to Donald. For between nine and ten miles we stuck to the path and made good time, then we swung off to the right through rough ground, and made a half circle to spy at land which was unseeable from the trail. After a long swing we worked back into the path again. It had been raining during the morning and the wind blew strongly upon our left sides as we followed the path.

About half-past one a granite monolith as large as a country cottage offered welcome shelter from the storm in which to dispose of luncheon. From this point, after a very short pipe following the food, we made up into the higher ground where Donald had spied some feeding animals. A good look through the glass, one which I verified through my binoculars, showed a fine, dark gray stag in the midst of half a hundred deer.

The stalk to get within shooting distance of him was a rather exceptional one, in that it called for moving over successive ridges which lay at right angles to the line of our advance. Never was a stalker's skill displayed to more advantage than in this movement. Donald made no mistakes. He always picked the dead ground.

We passed each high point out of sight of the suspicious and ever-watchful deer. For, mark you well, these Scotch deer are far more shy than those I have found anywhere upon the American Continent. Perhaps the open country in which they live explains this in part. As we drew near it became increasingly apparent that there were a number of hinds, far more watchful than the stags, between us and the object of our pursuit.

With the greatest care and circumspection, moving snakewise for the last hundred yards, we came out at last upon a minor hill of the high hills, from whence a view showed us that further advance was impossible. Donald, slipping the rifle from the case, at the same time indicated by a gesture of his forefinger that I should come forward. Field glass case and cap in my hand, I crawled level with him. I had just time to identify the gray stag I hoped to make mine when the big fellow moved into the recesses of a sheltering ravine and was lost to view.

From where I lay hinds were to my right front within 125 yards. To where the stag disappeared was a bit better than 200 yards. The depression into which he had gone ran at right angles to the direction in which my rifle pointed, and it appeared to be a fault in the hill, open at either end, both openings being visible from my vantage point. My stag could go out at the other end, possibly 200 yards from the point of entrance; he might return the way he had come, or he could move up the large hill which lay beyond the small one covering him. In any event it appeared probable he would have to come into sight before he could leave the vicinity.

I got into position and made myself as comfortable as possible in view of the driving rain which was now pouring down. Of course, I was as wet as a man could be and quite as much, of course, I soon grew so cold, so utterly chilled to the marrow of my bones, that I shivered as with a chill, and my teeth actually rattled until I feared the deer would hear the noise and take fright.

I stood it as long as I could, then I whispered to Donald: "I'm too cold to shoot if the stag comes out. We must do something." Silently he beckoned to me and together we started down the hill on the side opposite to the deer. For a little way we went cautiously and then feeling confident that the high wind which blew over us would carry all sound away from our quarry, we began to run swiftly down the precipitous slope.

We traveled for some hundred yards, when turning about, Donald led me up along almost the same way as fast as I could move, until he brought me out upon another little hill which lay just to the left

of the one previously chosen. Here I prepared myself a second time for a shot, and here also I found my stag still concealed. In no time at all, or so it seemed to me, I was as cold as ever.

Donald had been watching me anxiously, and now when I felt I could endure the situation no longer, he questioned in subdued tones, "D'ye see yon staug at the right end of the ravine, nigh to the three-black rocks?" I nodded yes. "The General could shoot him," my stalker continued, "and then the gran' gray 'un might cam' out, an gi' us a shot."

I made no comment. I simply said, "Shall I shoot this stag, Donald?" "Yes, yes, shoot un."

The deer in question was a scant 200 yards to my right front; moreover, the rain which was slanting down hit upon the back and side of my head, so that it did not, as so often it had under similar circumstances, blur my shooting glasses beyond any power of eye to pierce.

I swung the muzzle of my rifle cautiously in the direction of the unconscious stag until I got my view of him where he was outlined, a grayish brown smudge against a background of his own color. I quickly moved the rifle till sure I had it firmly grasped and confident that the sights were properly aligned with the front sight snugly in the bottom of that dangerous deep backsight, and then, with a point of aim which seemed to me the center of the body just back of his heart, I touched the trigger.

At that very instant, so quickly that it seemed the bullet could hardly have sped so soon upon its deadly way, the stag collapsed as if smitten by lightning's bolt. It needed no expert eye to see that here was no wounded creature, but one stone dead. At the shot all the deer were in motion; in a flash the big gray fellow I had first sought and who had been the object of the stalk came into view on the far side of the little hill racing up the higher hill beyond it at full speed, taking the ascent in great leaps.

It needed but a touch to eject the cartridge case and drive a new shell home and by a little movement to put the sights in the vicinity of the bounding gray fellow.

I knew what Donald expected; that I should wait until the stag stopped, but he was 250 yards away when he appeared and I had

seen deer run in that fashion on other days. When a stag seems to unloose all his energy with every leap you are not to expect him to stop within shooting distance. His intentions are evident in such a case. He means to get out of harm's way before he subsides.

So I knew this chap was as good as gone unless I fired while he ran. In the quick way in which one thinks under such circumstances I realized that to fire and hit him in the after part of the body and thus ruin a venison ham would be an unutterably ignominious act. I had to break his back or his neck as he traveled upward and away from me. Even as I thought and followed him with the rifle the sights seemed to show me that I had the right spot and I pulled. The bullet sped as true as a die, and if I fired ten thousand shots under similar circumstances I could never put one closer to the spot I had wished this one to go.

At the sound of the shot the stag collapsed, waved his forefeet feebly in the air for a moment and then rolled and slid down the hill. He was dead when, racing across the broken ground, I got to him. The bullet had entered squarely in the middle of his back at the point where his suspenders would have crossed had the creature been a man and fully clothed.

It was glorious good fortune. A double on stags is not so easy under any circumstances.

While the necessary attentions were being shown the stags by Donald and the gillie who accompanied us, I made my way down the hill and along the trail to where ponies were waiting. These I sent up with another gillie in charge of them to bring down the game, while I trudged in to the Lodge. It was not more than half-past three o'clock.

When I got in at five-thirty I was, though wet and bedraggled from my stalking, not unduly tired, although I had covered only a little less than thirty miles since morning.

One incident of the double shot of the day is too good to be omitted. As I have said, Donald took the keenest interest in the sport; ever ready to excuse a bad shot, he was just as willing to praise a more lucky one. When I fired the first time from the hillock and the stag fell at the shot, he said, with satisfaction in his tones, "You got 'un, you got 'un! A good shot!" and that was all.

But when the gray fellow stopped at the imperative summons of my rifle, stopped in mid career to tumble down the hill, the stolid phlegm of the sturdy Scotchman was torn from him as a tattered garment. As the beast fell, with the sure evidence of a mortal wound, and upon the heels of the shot, Donald, in vibrant tones, cried, "Ah, a gran' shot, a gran' shot—" and here he stopped to gasp, "Oh, sir, I never thocht ye'd shoot at 'un runnin', ah—ah—ah—I thocht ye'd wait for 'un to stop! Ah, it was a gran' shot, a gran' shot!"

His face was suffused, his eyes protruded from his head, he quivered in every muscle as he lay, the picture of the most intense delight and satisfaction. He had not stopped smiling when I left him to send up the ponies. I am sure he got quite as much satisfaction out of my lucky shot as came to me.

The first stag was a five-pointer weighing 13 stone 6. The second, the gray fellow, a seven-pointer of 16 stone 10, or 234 pounds. Both were in prime condition.

CHAPTER X.

A LOST STAG.

DANNY and Donald were with other sportsmen on the next morning and I had for my stalker John McIntyre, he of the black brows and seeming incapacity to locate grouse. John was keen enough on deer; there could be no mistake about that, but his mind moved slowly; he was not a first-class stalker. For the greater part he acted as a gillie, but this day it was necessary that he should be sent out with me.

With Donald, who had charge of the Warrior for the day, John and I with the accompanying gillies went along the same trail of many other days until we passed over the first high ridge and some of the broken ground beyond. Then to the left not over three-quarters of a mile from the trail there was discovered a band of thirty-five or forty deer, among them a good sized stag.

Donald instructed John to stop with me in a sheltered ravine while he with the rest of the party moved on along the trail as if the deer had not been seen. They showed a little uneasiness as we observed them through our glasses, but did not take fright. After our companions had disappeared, John and I began our stalk. It was not a difficult one; there was a natural point of vantage from a hill in the immediate front, where two large stones made a sort of landmark which I had frequently noticed from the path.

We made our way to these stones without detection and from here I was able to perceive the stag now desired, lying facing me, entirely surrounded by hinds and smaller stags. There was no possibility of a shot at him under the conditions. There was nothing remaining for me but a wait.

Though the sun shone brightly this morning for the moment, and I was only wet, as one might say, on the lower edges, having per-

formed but a stalk of half a mile or so, I did not find it possible to lie on the wet ground for more than half an hour without becoming too cold for comfort. When I had about given up the situation as a hopeless one, the deer, probably roused by some scent from the party ahead, rose to their feet, but by ill fortune the hinds nearest us got up first, then all of them in a big body moved away.

It was impossible to shoot, although I hoped and watched for an opening, without running a long chance of hitting a hind; so I was compelled to lie tight and watch my stag walk away.

Strangely enough the deer changed their minds, after having gone four or five hundred yards, and began to feed; then they slowly worked back toward the point from which they had first been startled. In another hour they were back within 450 yards. Then John undertook to take me out of the place in which we were and by a roundabout way to bring me out on the hillside at a new point which would be close enough for a shot.

We made the stalk, but from lack of experience or because he wanted that inborn sense for stealth and secret approach which is an indispensable part of a stalker's equipment, John, though he got me close enough to the deer, about 200 yards, did so only at the cost of disturbing them, so, when I moved into firing position, they were alarmed and on foot. That would not have been serious but for the stag being surrounded on all sides by hinds. There was no way I could fire at him without running the risk of hitting one of the others and that was not to be thought of.

I kept the rifle as near on him as I could and hoped for an opening through which a shot could be delivered. Finally, at a distance just short of 400 yards when all hope had begun to disappear, the deer strung out in a longer line to get through a narrow way and I chanced a long and hard shot at the stag, now moving at good speed.

I fired quickly, instinctively favoring the left a little, as my target was moving from right to left. The stag left the line of the others and made several bounds at a peculiar gait in a downhill direction. Then he went on, apparently quite as good as ever. I asked John, who was supposed to be watching the beast through his telescope, if he could tell where the shot had struck. He was unable to say.

I got my field glasses on the stag as quickly as possible and it seemed to me that not only could I detect a strangeness in his gait as he ran on with the others, but the right foreleg, the one which had been most distant from me when I fired, had the appearance of being broken.

I was greatly disturbed, and I blamed myself severely. I should never have taken such a shot. The distance was over-great, the time short, and the stag had been moving rapidly. I had been having such magnificent luck though, five stags in five shots, on two occasions, a double on stags, that I suppose I had grown over confident. Rather impressed, as one sometimes becomes, you know, with the feeling that it is impossible to miss.

From my experience with deer in other places I reasoned that this fellow, if he had a broken leg, would go on for some considerable distance, then he would lie down. If I could locate the spot where he stopped for his rest it might be possible to pick him up again, because if he were not disturbed quickly he would lie almost as close as a quail, and I could have a chance for a shot which would put him out of his misery.

I was, of course, distressed, because of wounding instead of killing the animal, but there was no use feeling too badly over it; it was done and could not be helped. The next thing was to get that stag if there was any way to do it.

We climbed quickly to a high point and saw the line of deer come out on a ridge further on, from which they disappeared into a great corrie with lips a mile apart and which had a depth of near to a thousand feet. I felt sure the deer would be some time in getting out of that place, so we sat down here and lunched. Then we went on to further high ground which permitted us to command the corrie where the deer had disappeared and the exit from it.

Just as we came in sight of the way out we discovered, in a straight line perhaps a mile and a half distant, the herd of deer moving up the steep hillside across the short level space and disappearing, in turn, on the far side. I had John and the gillie put their telescopes on the herd and I watched them quite closely with my fine, clear little Warner and Swasey prism binocular.

I cautioned the men particularly to identify, if they could, the stag I had shot at for the purpose of seeing in what way he appeared to be wounded. They seemed in some doubt as the last of the animals disappeared, but John said finally he thought all the deer appeared to be unharmed, and he said he believed, although he was not sure, that the animal I had shot was among them. I could not credit that statement as the true state of affairs.

We were just about to get up and go on when, still gazing through my glasses, I spied a moving object traveling in the trace of the herd which had so lately gone from sight. I called, quickly, "John, there's my deer! Just going up where the others did. Look at him and see if his right foreleg is not broken?" It was true. It seemed almost incredible and I would never have believed it if I had not seen similar wonderful efforts on the part of three-legged deer upon other occasions; that this stag should follow the herd over the rough ground and be but some three or four hundred yards behind.

The three glasses glued to him seemed to give our hunted creature a new lease of life. He went on the way the other deer had traveled, disappearing in his turn. Then a portion of the original herd with our wounded one 200 yards or more in the rear came in sight, further along to the left toward the hilltop and again disappeared. We waited for a time sufficient to justify me in believing that the deer were not coming into our range of vision again; therefore, we must go to where we could see.

I told John we would have to run to the top of the mountain where we had last seen the deer, and I instructed him to go on as fast as he could, which would surely be at a greater speed than I could compass. When he came to the top he was to spy in every direction for the wounded stag. I would catch up with him as quickly as I could.

Running and making one's very best speed over rock-strewn and precipitous ground is an exciting sport. I recommend it to those who suffer from a sluggish liver or an overpowering *ennui.* It was a windy day but no rain was falling. I had not noticed the wind particularly until I came out upon the crest well blown and with pulses which throbbed furiously, to find myself battling against a wind which almost took me from my feet.

John and I spied upon the herd, soon discovered moving further and further away from us, but neither his long telescope nor my good field glasses could find the hit stag in the lot.

We decided to work back along the mountainside in the hope of locating by blind luck the place where it seemed possible the stag might have lain down. Hunting for the proverbial needle in the hay stack would be an easy task compared to that which John and I had set for ourselves in trying to locate the wounded animal.

Not only was there available some square miles of broken ground offering much cover for this evasive beast to lie in, but fold after fold of the hill slope was invisible from the one on either side as this mountain did not go down in one straight line, but in successive folds.

We came at length to what seemed the end of all our resources, and stopped to talk it over. It did not seem possible the deer could be ahead of us. He might be anywhere behind us, down or up, the hillside. We might, I reasoned, have passed within fifty feet of him in the condition I imagined he then was, and he would be very apt to simply lie closer and pay no attention to us.

In search of a clue which might guide us, I requested John to point out the place where he had last seen the stag. He did so and I identified almost exactly the same spot. I reasoned from this that the stag might have turned back along the hillside instead of going further away from us. With this idea in mind, I told John that we would go on for another two hundred yards or so to the next shoulder which came down at right angles, and if we did not then see a sign of our quarry, we would give him up.

While I was talking to the stalker, I was filling my pipe. I stopped after he had begun the forward movement, to light it. I looked up from this important occupation, upon a startled exclamation from John, to see beyond him, not over fifty feet in his front, our wounded stag making his way rapidly down the hill to our left front, his right foreleg showing plainly broken and useless.

John had the rifle; the rifle was in the leather scabbard and instead of rushing to me and at the same time drawing the weapon from its covering, John stood in apparent stupefaction and looked. I had to run to him, take the case from his hand and then drag the rifle

from it with feverish fingers before I could think of shooting. Of course, while there was a cartridge in the chamber the safety was on; one touch of the thumb put it flat as I threw the rifle to my shoulder, but at that instant my deer bobbed out of sight behind a fold of the hill a hundred yards away.

I ran at my top speed to the place where I had seen him last, but he was out of sight. I thought he might have turned to the left and I ran in that direction to the next view point. No stag in sight. Then I turned sharply to the right and sprinted for all I was worth for a hundred yards or more, this time to see the stag nearly four hundred yards down the hill and making away at an incredible rate of speed. He literally seemed to fly through the air. It was marvelous how that deer could and did disappear on three legs.

We sat down upon the hillside, John and I, and I finished the operation of loading my pipe. I did not swear, although I felt like it. Meanwhile, through the glasses our stag could be seen making his way down into the bottom of a large corrie and then across toward the high wall which rose on the other side. Finally, he disappeared in a ravine two miles or more away. I gave John instructions to sit on the hillside and watch very carefully through his glasses the point where the deer had gone out of sight, while I, this time with the rifle uncased in my own hand, went across to see if I could, by the faintest possible chance, find him.

I did not expect to, because, if my recollection served me right, a deer which could run at all under such circumstances, and this one most assuredly could do something in that line, would continue to run until he fell if disturbed from his first rest, and that might be for miles and miles.

I made a fruitless search in the vicinity of the ravine. John came over and we beat out every inch of ground near the place possible for a hiding point, until darkness had closed around us. But no sign of the stag could we find. After dark we made along the shore of a small loch a mile in length toward the path. It was bad going.

The deep, sticky, peat gullies and hags, the loose, sharp cornered stones, the sudden breaks and falls in the ground made us go carefully, and even then furnished more than one tumble. We came out after a time upon the path none the worse for it except for the mud which was never yet known to seriously injure anyone.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT.

I ATTEMPTED an experiment the next day and wished afterward I had not. There was a rifle in the Lodge fitted with a telescopic sight. I had never used this kind of a device for shooting game, and I thought I should like to try. It was said the telescope was accurately adjusted to the rifle. I asked about it because I knew from range experience how serious is the problem of attaching a telescopic sight to a rifle of high power in such a way as to insure no deviations from accurate sighting.

I showed forethought enough to attempt to sight the rifle in before I went into the deer forest, but I had only an opportunity for a few shots and while those all went wild except one, I thought the fault was my own and not that of the sight and rifle combination. Later I discovered my mistake.

John was my stalker again and we went in an entirely new direction. For the greater part our way lay over high grasslands under which the water spread everywhere and gave tokens of its presence by occasionally lapping over the tops of the shoes and always by the squish-squash which marked one's footsteps. The fall weather in these higher altitudes is not expected to be fine; one anticipates rain.

Anticipations in the present case were not disappointed and on the whole, I do not object to a certain amount of rain, but the sort of downfall that came this day and the way it assailed me did ruffle my temper somewhat. We were walking straight into a high wind. The rain slanted down with the moving air and pelted us squarely in the faces. That meant a blur over my shooting spectacles, which made it impossible for me to walk twenty feet without having the impression of marching bodily into a heavy fog.

Frequent applications of the handkerchief availed momentarily to remove the trouble, but after a time even that temporary relief was

denied me, because the handkerchief became so wet it only smeared the glasses when I tried to use it. I was forced finally to put them down low on my nose and make the best of it, looking over the tops of them. And then the rain hit my eyes, which are none too strong anyway, and I confess to being just a little cross.

We lunched at half past one, where a very uncomfortable, wet, soggy bank only partly sheltered us from the storm, and then we went on in a wide swing that brought us into Glen Muick, a mile or more below where I killed my first stag. Here John discovered deer and led a good stalk which brought us into a burn of no great size running between walls six to eight feet high. We went down this until we came within 225 yards of a fine stag, lying down among a mixed lot of twenty or more youngsters and hinds.

When I poked the muzzle of my rifle over the bank through the grass in the direction of the unsuspecting deer, I had to move my head around for a time until my eye could accommodate itself to the 'scope. Then it was necessary to change the position of the tube to find the deer. When I did get the instrument pointing toward him, the magnification was such that I could actually see his eyes as he lay facing me, while his breast below the head seemed to me an ample mark for an accurate rifle fitted with the telescopic sight.

With this thought in mind, I carefully centered the cross hairs on a little lighter colored spot which seemed about the middle of his chest, and gently pulled the trigger. I was so astounded when the stag went up and ran away that for several seconds I failed to snap in a loaded cartridge and then again I was remiss because I forgot all about the open sight which lay alongside the 'scope, and frantically hunted for my stag through the lenses.

It was no use. I never found that stag through the telescope and I had to content myself with John's sympathetic remark that it was "always verra hard to shoot a staug lyin' doon."

Later on the same afternoon I caught sight of a deer down hill to our left. That was 600 yards away. Just the upper part of his horns I could pick out, and from where we were upon sloping grassland with no concealment except that offered by the folds of the ground, there was no chance to see more without exposing ourselves

to the sight of the deer. We therefore made a stalk to a point from which a shot could be fired if a shootable stag were found in the lot.

Taking advantage of a slight depression here and there and by very careful work, we finally came to within practically 200 yards of the deer. When we looked them over there were three stags, one a very fair sized fellow. I asked John what he thought. He answered that though they were not "verra large, the General may shoot one if he likes."

Through the telescope I had pointed at them, that I might look them over, the best seemed to weigh not over 185 pounds, and he was evidently a young animal. I whispered to John that I would not shoot, and we commenced a retrograde movement. We climbed backward with as much skill as we had crawled forward, and rose to our feet when the ground would permit us to do so, without having frightened the deer in the least.

It was rather a long walk back to the Lodge and there were times when it seemed possible we might be able to make another stalk, but no chance for a shot came, although just before dark, when we were seated upon the edge of a long slope spying below, a young stag put his head over a spur of our ridge about 250 yards from us. I swung the telescope very quietly in his direction and had a fine view of him while he waited and watched to see what we were.

We sat perfectly still. The wind was from him to us and the light was exceedingly dim. Every line of his tense neck and alertly poised head bespoke apprehension and heralded instant flight if his suspicions were confirmed. Finally, however, instead of the expected rush from the dangerous locality, he withdrew very slowly, moving in a direction at right angles to that required for direct departure.

Waiting for ten or fifteen seconds and feeling him gone, we arose slowly to our feet, when instantly, the head of the wily animal appeared for a moment to as quickly vanish as its owner made lightning progress out of the country. The clever beast had simply temporarily withdrawn as a blind, feeling sure if we were alive we would move and that a return after a short pause would disclose the truth to him.

I felt that I had no time to attempt the adjustment of the telescope which had foiled me, to the rifle, so I set it aside and the next morning returned to my own faithful weapon.

My stalk was with Danny, in the far ground of the stony dykes where I had been with him on two other occasions, once to miss a steeply downhill shot, after the grand stalk down the dangerous face, while the Chief killed his deer, the other to pursue phantom stags all day and fire not at all.

The mist on this day was the heaviest I had yet found in Scotland. It shut down about us so thickly at times that it was not possible to see twenty feet in any direction. It was like a London fog, only lacking the smells of the city to be quite the counterpart of that metropolitan murkiness.

We had to sit down upon the mountainside and wait and wait and wait, one hour, two hours, three hours, in the cold and the damp for the fog to clear or lift. Every few moments Danny or one of the two gillies with us would say, "Weel, I'm thinkin' 'twill be better syne," but the "syne" was a long one. Finally, after about three hours there did seem to be more light, although the fog was not dissipated, and we moved on to the top.

Here the fog had turned by now into rain which, driven by a high wind, made itself felt beyond any attempts to ignore it. Looking over the edge of the high rock dyke, which formed the limit of the particular mountain we were on, the fog in the valley below resembled great masses of slightly soiled white cotton drawn hither and thither and yon by great invisible fingers impatient of its presence and desirous of removing it.

We also were impatient of it, because we felt, though we could not see, the presence of deer in the lower levels. The wind on the top by some slanting process of its own, or it may be because it veered in direction, began to cut into glen and corrie and tumble the mist out ahead of it.

There came breaks in the curtain, which hid the floor of the nearest big corrie from us and through one of these Danny soon picked up a good herd of deer. They were not at all satisfied with themselves or their position and were moving around most restlessly. We watched them a long time before the experienced stalker made up his mind to

attempt an approach. Then, when he did so, in the cleared condition of the atmosphere, it was seen that the stalk required passing within sight of three other lots of deer.

Thus Danny's task was quadrupled. He had to stalk so that we should be invisible from four points at once. It seemed a task beyond the power of man, but my lengthy Scotchman was successful, although what he did availed us not at all, for the deer we sought moved part way up the shoulder of the mountain. As they came quartering toward us I felt they had not seen nor scented us.

We now had to climb back up to the top of the mountain down whose face we had so cautiously and laboriously moved for at least a thousand feet. From the top Danny spied our animals, this time apparently settled because some of them were lying down and the rest quietly feeding.

We worked our way along the summit for some distance and then Danny motioned to me and whispered that the only way to get at the deer was by stalking down a very steep grassy face for a hundred yards, half of this distance within plain sight of the deer if they should look up. I told him it would be a new experience and he could lead on.

That was a most engaging stalk. I enjoyed every minute of it. The ground, just about as sharply tilted as any ground could be and still hold grass, or itself, for that matter, clung to the face of the mountain. Danny went first, flat upon his stomach, digging hands and elbows and knees and toes into the soil and I followed literally upon his heels, for sometimes my body would move forward more rapidly than I wished and my face actually touch the hobnailed bottoms of his boots.

I had my field glasses in a case suspended from my shoulder. This swung around underneath me and digging into the earth acted as a brake. I attempted to make no move until I was sure my toe-hold gained by pressing the toe of my heavy shoe, protuberantly hobnailed, into the bank would make me feel reasonably safe.

At that it was touch and go often whether I would start a sliding, downhill movement which would only end at the bottom of the tidy

little precipice of several hundred feet, that furnished the lower edge of the glass slope. I literally hugged the earth all the way.

I recall that a feeling of stern necessity for getting as low to the ground as I could that the deer might not be alarmed, caused me to never raise my eyes from what was immediately in front of me, and it was thus I saw the single barreled small field glass of Danny, just under my nose where it had slipped from his breast pocket as he preceded me.

Deer, like so many other animals, are more easily approached from above and this face was literally so perpendicular that even had the deer felt themselves in danger I doubt if they would have suspected the approach of an enemy down this dangerous slope unless they had caught the scent. The wind was quite right for us, and the stalk entirely successful, in so far as it put us out upon a rocky ledge after the crawl down and a climb up, a ledge which was not over 180 yards from where the nearest deer lay.

With some difficulty Danny succeeded in pointing out to me the shootable stag. This fellow lay stern on. He had been rolling in a peat hag, too, and as he lay among peat hags it was almost impossible to distinguish him in the failing light of the late afternoon. I got my position from which to fire and looked as intently as I could through the sights.

I soon decided it would be impossible to get in a shot at him until he rose, therefore I had another one of those wait-and-get-cold experiences which had now grown familiar. It was not alone the fact that I soon was shivering in my wet clothes which made me anxious, but the light was rapidly fading out of the West, and there were not many more minutes left in which an aimed shot could be fired.

In my lowest practicable voice I intimated to Danny that it would be necessary to do something. He offered this whispered observation: "Some gentlemen would like me to *whustle 'um.*" I answered him, "Go ahead and whistle, Danny. Anything to get them up."

Danny gave one long, shrill whistle. I had the rifle pointed as close as I could hold it on my stag, and I expected to put a shot toward him as soon as he gave me a chance by starting to rise. Somewhat to my astonishment nothing happened. I turned to Danny to

say, "Whistle again," when his remark, "They're off," brought my eyes back again to the deer. They were up and moving away. The whistle had reached them, but apparently by a slower route than I had anticipated.

I was a little flurried by the incident, I will admit, and my stag moving straight away from me on ground which gave me no chance to shoot him in the back had no tendency to calm my nerves. The result was that when he turned to the right very slightly so that a section perhaps three inches wide of his shoulder might have been said to be visible beyond his flank, I attempted to put a bullet in that section.

But as I pulled I knew I had favored the left a little too much. My fear was, of course, that I should shoot to the right and thus hit the deer in the ham. The mistake I actually made was the reverse of this. I wabbled at the moment of firing to the left until the bullet must have sped harmlessly by the very nose of my intended victim.

Near the crest of a hill my deer was out of sight in a twinkling before I could finish saying to Danny, "I missed him to the left!" Danny, good kind soul that he was, used a great deal more emphasis than I would have thought of applying under the same circumstances to assure me how hard it was for a man to shoot in such light and when as "cauld" as I was, at a moving deer, plastered with mud that made him look just like the mud itself, which was all very well, as an evidence of the fine quality of Danny's sportsmanship, but there was no palliation possible in my case. I just missed and that was all there was to it.

But I did not feel very badly over it. I had killed five stags without a miss. They told me my score of deer per shot was far above the average. I was having one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life, the rare combination of hard mountain climbing with enough spice from the pursuit of game to make it piquant, which appealed to me beyond any form of sport I had previously indulged in, and a miss or two or even more could not make me down hearted. I was only sorry that Danny should be compelled to apologize for me. He had made such a magnificent stalk under circumstances so difficult that it really seemed ungrateful of me to fail in my shot.

The walk back to the Lodge was without exceptional interest, but I enjoyed it hugely, because after the first mile my blood was moving merrily through my veins and I lost the feeling of chill which had been almost constantly with me since my first advent into the world of fog in the early morning.

CHAPTER XII.

JOHN AND I GO TO THE HIGH FLATS.

BLACK browed John had me again on the day after I had missed the slant-wise stag and we went to the plateau land of our other stalk, but on this day the sun shone, oh, most merrily and graciously the sun shone; and the air was clear, as clear as a crystal bell.

I vowed the discomforts and hardships of a thousand days like the one just passed, wiped out and forever obliterated by one hour of such supreme bodily comfort and satisfactory elevation of mind as the warm sun and the sweet wind and the fair, friendly hills, and the twinkling lochs and the singing burns and the dancing blood gave me.

And when we had to sit for a little time on a grassy bank, for a wonder almost dry, it seemed to me I had in the sweet aroma of my dear old pipe a physical gratification and enjoyment beyond classification or expression. When John was spying from the point near where I sat making sweet medicine with my pipe, five deer were visible and soon others.

A large herd of seventy or eighty animals in all was on the move. They were more than a mile from us. The two telescopes of John and the gillie, Duncan, and my field glasses followed them on. They were making a journey. That was certain. Occasionally an individual would take a hurried nibble of grass, but that was exceptional. They kept walking on almost as steadily as a flock of sheep driven by a shepherd. Their course would cause them to disappear behind the crest of a grassy hill a mile and a half in front of us.

When they were out of sight we were on foot and moving in their direction. We approached the top with caution. There was nothing

one could gather which was at all useful in determining where these deer had gone, but once a view from the crest became ours and the story took a different turn.

We looked over the reaches of a down slope extending for half a mile to a valley, the valley, in turn, half a mile or more wide at this point; in its lowest part a sizeable burn, on the far side at its edge another hill like ours, rising gradually up to the sky, between the hills, in view but on the far side of the stream, over a hundred deer, large and little, unconscious of our presence, but not all content, for the rutting season had just begun and the stags were mortal enemies now where they had but lately been as friendly as brothers.

Through the glasses the whole herd, brought close by the magic of the optician aided by the clear air of the day, were as if at our feet, to watch as we would. And there was nothing else to do but watch, because the little stream which flowed between the deer and us marked the limit of the march. That is to say, the extreme edge of the Benmore deer forest in that direction. On the far side of it, although the land was also that of my host, a lease ran on its broad acres to another sportsman.

So I say, all we could do was lie upon the grass-clad hill top and watch our deer, now joined to another herd, feeding, fighting and making love at their leisure, as safe from us as if in another world. It was not so unpleasant, either. I could have wished, perhaps, a shot at that fine sturdy fellow whose strength put all the other stags to flight, but then why remove him? I rather thought it better as it was.

My opportunities for observing the habits of the deer at the mating season were never better. These stags had for their ways those of stags everywhere, I imagine; and they herded their harems of soft-eyed hinds with as much care as I have seen a horse ranger on the Western plains ride herd upon a wild lot of cayuses.

When the stag was upon the one side of his little family herd some interloper would approach from the other; whereupon the lordling would rush frantically in that direction, antlers down and neck hairs bristling. If the stranger thought well enough of himself to do battle he stood fast and the antagonists met head on.

I remember when I was a boy going to school I used to play "rooster fight," a game in which two adversaries put their shoulders together and each tried by main strength to push the other back. The one giving ground was defeated. This seemed to be about the program for the stags, substituting heads for shoulders.

Although I saw them make lunges at each other with their needle-pointed antlers, such severe treatment rarely seemed necessary. Two stags met, encountered, did each his best to push the other stag, one gave back and loped away to leave the other master of the field and head of his transitory household.

I would have been content to watch the deer longer, but John, feeling sure they were not for us, because without intent to return to our side of the land, wanted to move on that he might give me a shot somewhere else. I knew what was in the big fellow's mind. This was the third day I had been deer stalking with him. Once I had broken a beast's leg, once I had missed (the day with the telescope), and on this third one the whole desire of his heart was to bring me close enough to a stag for a shot.

We covered a vast amount of ground this day, as we walked rapidly and only paused for a few moments to lunch, so that about an hour before sunset—unchecked, except where we had once stalked to a vantage point near two hinds hoping there might be a stag near—we came in sight of another large herd of deer. I counted 120. There were probably more.

There were two or three good stags in this lot, but they were out upon what looked like a perfectly flat and level plain and the chances of approaching them—although the wind, which had been blowing wrongly, turned almost at the moment we first saw the deer until it was quite from them to us—seemed small.

After an examination of the ground through his telescope, which consumed a full fifteen minutes of the precious daylight left to us, John began to stalk; a stalk which was to continue for over three miles, through little depressions, along small burns, in them, over them and by them, to a scene at last like this: Two hot, perspiring men, one a black-browed, brawny Scotchman in tweeds; the other, the American who writes this; behind them a third figure, the gillie Duncan. The two first lying flat-spread in the grass of a little round

mound, not quite a hill, in a light so faint through the sun's absence and by cause of approaching night, that it could just be shot in, and that was all.

To their front, oh, say two hundred yards, within a yard, a fine stag outlined on the edge of a hill until he looked less than half the distance away; and as we are watching these men we see the one who is to shoot reaching cautiously back with his sole and single hand, the left, to take the now unscabbarded rifle which the stalker has slipped from its receptacle, and made ready for him.

Mind you, they are both lying as flat to the ground as men can crowd. In front of the one who hopes to shoot is already the little brown field glass case with his yellowish old velveteen cap atop. Fit rest, he thinks, for what he hopes will be a telling shot. He is reaching, I say, for the rifle which the stalker thrusts swiftly but silently toward him, when his ear is assailed by "They're off, they're off!" in tones like those an angry dog uses when a bone has been taken from him.

No wonder John was angry. I would have been feeling as he did, in his place, for as I flung my eyes back to where the stag had stood his place was vacant. He had vanished over the edge of the hill from me as if swallowed up by an opening of the earth. There was nothing to do but to get upon our feet, slip the rifle back in its covering and fall into the regular tramp for the path which was to take us back to the Lodge.

Half way to the path, well, say a mile and a half from where the stalk ended, it was quite fully dark, and now, as if to add to poor John's mortification and disappointment, we walked within seventy-five yards of three fine stags which stood and looked upon us, or so it seemed, and smiled as one would think, to feel themselves safe. I have a notion that John would have been quite willing for me to take a shot at these, and I felt confident I could have hit one at the short range, regardless of the fact that it would have been impossible to see either front or rear sight distinctly, but I did not feel myself so abjectly in need of a stag as to justify shooting one at short range and in the dark.

When we got to the path five miles from the Lodge, John and Duncan, as by custom, fell into the rear and I swung out on my own

for the Lodge. I moved on at a merry clip, and while I regretted, to be sure, the long stalk which had ended in a blank, I found the day in retrospect not the least good of the many grand Highland days I had had.

It was quite dark, because the moon had not put in an appearance, when crossing a large burn two miles from my destination, I had what might easily have been a most serious mishap. The way of crossing this particular stream was by stepping from one large stone to another. The water was about three feet deep and it ran with great swiftness.

The stones, various heights above it as the stage of its flow varied, were large, irregular shaped and generally protruding about two feet from the surface. They would have offered a good enough foothold for a hobnailed shoe had they not been so far apart. As it was, in the very middle of the stream, there was a space of at least four feet which had to be bridged by a step.

I misjudged my distance in the dark at this long reach and though my foot struck the rock in front it slipped and I had to spring with all the force I could gather to the next rock, swinging forward my other foot as I leaped. This foot, in turn, struck the object for which it was intended, but it also slipped and I plunged headlong upon the boulder-strewn bank of the stream.

The points of contact were the end of my short arm and my right knee. I thought I had broken both, but rubbing and what I could do at the moment gave me reason to believe that I had not actually fractured a bone. I got up and hobbled on. The further I went the more easily I walked and I got to the Lodge with nothing more than a perceptible limp and some uncomfortable pains from bruised bones, but not otherwise the worse for wear.

My knee was gaily colored in beautiful browns and purples and puffed to perfection when I dressed the next morning, but I was confident it would carry me through what was to be my last day's stalk in the Highlands.

CHAPTER XIII.

DONALD TAKES ME FOR THE LAST STALK.

AND now for me came the designation of a stalker and a spot which above all others most pleased me. I was to go with Donald, Donald of my first deer, Donald of my lucky double when I happened to get the flying big gray fellow on the mountainside, after I had killed his smaller brother, a few seconds before. Donald who had given me my first taste of the hardships and the goodships, the toil and the rest, the misery and the joy of Highland deer stalking. Together we were to go to far Corrie Vattie, twelve miles out.

We started early, and taking notice of my stiff knee, I rode for the greater part of the way up. It was a misty, rainy day. I remember how misty and rainy because after we had come down from the ponies; and made our first climb and spied deer and found hinds in the way; and tried to make them move on by putting a handkerchief up by means of a stick, above the hiding rock; and after they had made haste away, instead of going cautiously, and frightened the whole herd; we selected a stag and I had tried to shoot.

But the rain met me full in the face and my glasses would not stay clear long enough for me to align the sights. I tried once and I tried twice; I tried many times. It was impossible. My eyes are not strong and there is a defect of vision through astigmatism. The light was poor, but I had to do something, so I pulled the shooting glasses down low on my nose and tried a quick though careful aim with the naked eye.

I felt satisfied at the first attempt and pulled, to see the following sink and sway and then to my anxiety a movement to the front by my deer. But he was not to escape. He had not gone many feet, until he stopped, swayed for an instant and then crashed broadside down, legs extended, obviously dead at the moment.

It had taken time for all this. It was now after two o'clock. After this stag had been attended to and drawn to where signals could bring the gillies with the pony to take him further and then home, I asked Donald if he thought it would be possible to get another stag before dark; a stag with a good head; not necessarily a *grand* one, but a representative one, which I could have mounted and take back to America with me. He would promise nothing except to do his best.

The weather was very thick by now and it was impossible to spy successfully for any considerable distance. We therefore had to move rapidly from place to place, covering ground with our feet that we might have swept with the glasses if the weather had been better. We came quickly to trotting, because it was apparent dark would descend early and Donald was as eager as I for that seventh and last stag, with the fair head.

Just like looking for anything else that you particularly wish to find our search for a good stag on this afternoon seemed doomed to failure. Here and there we went, trotting often, actually running downhill frequently, and for this kind of exploring covering a really large amount of territory, but nowhere did we see the stag we sought. Then at Donald's suggestion we went down upon the path and started in the direction of the Lodge. He felt we would have an opportunity there to make more distance in less time and could quite as reasonably expect to get sight of a stag from vantage points along the trail as from any others.

We had gone perhaps a mile down this trail and were within half an hour of dark when Donald sat down upon a heather bank to spy. While his glass was glued to the landscape I heard a stag roar. You will remember the rutting season had commenced a day or two before and the first symptoms of it were now in evidence. Quickly the Scotchman looked up from his spying and said, "Where wad that staug be, General?"

I replied; "Just over there, Donald, about half a mile in that direction. Look and see if you can find him." He turned the glass toward where I pointed. "Well, I queried, crisply," "do you see him, do you see him?"

"No, sir. I see no staug, but I do see two hinds." "Well, Donald," I instructed, "it's no use looking any longer for the stag. He's there, if the hinds are there. Is there any chance to stalk him?"

"There's a wee bit chance, sir. Aboot one in a hunner," my cautious stalker answered. "If we go by the loch we may do it, but the time is verra short."

"Yes," I replied; "I know that. We've only a few minutes to make this stalk, and it's the last stalk I shall have in the Highlands. If there's one chance in a hundred or one in a thousand we'll take it. Let's get on as fast as we can."

Nothing loath, Donald slipped back off the hill, and then together we ran down the far side of it to the loch-side where, turning to the left, we made on as fast as we could go, sometimes in the water, sometimes out of it, but always hurrying, hurrying, hurrying, one foot after the other as fast as we could put them down, racing with darkness; moving to beat the chariots of the night.

The loch end gained, we took to the peat hags and the shelters of bracken-clad low hills, and we came at just dark, or perhaps an instant before, to a heather hidden mound where we lay panting while Donald said, "Can you see the two hinds?" I could, because they were upon the sky line and I looked toward the West. There was a little light left but it was very little. Still I could see the two female deer.

"Do you see the stag, Donald?" I gasped, for I had used about all the breath I had in reaching this point. "Yes, sir," was my man's reply. "Two other hinds and the staug are just this way from the two hinds you see."

"How far is it, Donald, to the two hinds?"

"A good three hunner yards, sir."

"Can we get closer?"

"There's na chance sir, an' the light'll be gone in a meenit."

I could not see the stag. He was entirely out of my sight in the semi-darkness of the hillside, but Donald with sharper eyes and the advantage of his telescope could see. Now he asked: "Could ye shoot the staug if he came out on the sky line, sir?" "I could try," I answered. "Weel, ye'll be wantin' to get ready then, because he's like to be coming up any meenit."

I had sunk my elbows deep into the thick heather of the hill and had not bothered to bring forward my field glass case because the thickly placed shrubs seemed to give support enought for my rifle.

Looking through the sights I could dimly discern the front sight and the top of the rear sight, which, as you will remember, was a wide V and a deep one. The narrow bottom of that V where the bead of my front sight must needs go if I were to have a normal aim was as invisible as if non-existent.

I knew instantly of course that I should have to fire with a coarse sight. I had little time to think and had no idea how much difference changing my sighting would make at 300 yards. No opportunity was given me for lengthy consideration of it, which was perhaps just as well. As I lay and peered forward toward that dim hill with its two hinds faintly, very faintly silhouetted, came the stag in sight.

He was facing uphill and I could see the outlines of his body, but none too clearly. At the view of him, at the very instant of his coming I determined to hold with my coarse sight half way between his body and the earth line. The moment he was fully exposed, gaining this hold, I pressed the trigger.

At the sound of the shot he whirled as if upon a pivot, facing downhill now instead of up, still outlined against what light there was left in the Western sky. Quickly as he had turned, just as quickly my hand had snapped open and flung to the bolt of my dear little gun, and before he could move or think of moving another step my second shot was on its way, pointed this time at the earth line itself where the sky marked its ending.

I would you might have seen what happened then. It seemed to me that the instant my forefinger contracted the stag went into the air as if propelled by a catapult. It looked like many feet, he rose; his forelegs doubled back under him; hind legs extended, he sprang one great mighty, glorious leap into space and then disappeared into nothingness, for the moment he came to the level of the earth again he was out of my sight.

Donald, his voice vibrant with emotion, intense, significant and strained to a screaming point, fairly exploded at me: "You got un! You got un! You got un!" Every nerve in me was tingling, and his words stung me like an electric shock.

It was a difficult shot to try. Anybody would say that, and it was one chance in a hundred, yes, one in a thousand that it could be made.

If I had done it, it was by good luck and an inspirational selection of the right point of hold.

With a voice that trembled in spite of me, I asked: "Donald, do you think he's dead or only wounded?" "Oh," gave me back the stalker, "I'm thinkin', General, when ye get there ye'll find him dead as a dure nail and shot through the heart."

I said, "Run on for goodness' sake, as fast as you can. Don't wait for me; I'll come as quickly as I may, because he might be only hurt and we must not lose him in the darkness." And so we plunged away. It was a difficult matter. The ground was very broken; there were little burns to cross and peat hags to negotiate.

I had some falls, and I hurried mightily, but before I could arrive, Donald was there, twenty yards before me and after one hurried look into the heather, he held his stick aloft in his right arm, and waved it triumphantly.

Then I knew that my glorious crowning experience was to have for its exclamation point, for its adorning, for its emphasizing, for its reminder, for its suggestion to recollection until I died, the head of that good stag upon my wall at home in America, and I was deeply glad, and wholly grateful to the friend who had given me the opportunity, and for the good fortune which had attended my amateur and maiden efforts at deer stalking in the Highlands.

A long whistle brought up the two gillies. The deer attended to and his head cut off at the shoulders, it was dark. And I carried the head out for myself, to where the ponies were, a bit more than a mile, through darkness now quite complete and over ground as rough as anyone could by extremest stretch imagine. Then for the Lodge upon a good pony's back following Donald, who walked by preference, for four miles until he branched off to go to his own cottage.

And here at the parting of the trails I bade Donald, good stalker, good sportsman, and good friend, farewell. And so on back to the Lodge where ten o'clock saw me sitting at table and trying,—withal, with futility, though the listeners were most sympathetic—to convey to the Chief and the Warrior the thrilling enjoyment, the passionate pleasure of this crowning, culminating glory of my grand shooting experience.

CHAPTER XIV.

BALNAGOWN AND BIRDS.

SLIPPING down the hills, gliding over the tops and moving swiftly toward the lower ground by the sea in a comfortable motor car, well handled, is not a bad way to pass a sunny Sunday morning. From Benmore to Balnagown recollection of the good stalks rife with lively incidents; blood strongly stirring with healthy vigor and reaching out with imagination's hands for the softer though still great pleasures of bird shooting, one could not be unhappy, try ever so hard.

Taking one's ease after days of strenuous highland stalking is not an unpleasant way to pass a little time. Nor are the hours wasted spent in wandering through fine old woods, well kept gardens or—mention it not in the hearing of those who would consider such an act iconoclastic—along the flume that bears water from the modern concrete dam to the latest model of turbine and develops electric current for the castle or power for the sawmill with which my host amuses himself.

I was told that nine o'clock Tuesday morning would be a good time for me to start for a day at walking up partridges. I met Campbell, the head keeper at the main door of the Castle, as, equipped for soft ground work, I stepped out at that hour the next morning. The motor waited and in this we sped away, six miles or so along hedged lanes, by woods and fields and farms to a crossroad where we encountered Morrison, underkeeper, with bulbous nose and rheumy eyes, courteous, willing and anxious to please.

Descending from the motor, we prepared to enter a turnip field which was convenient to our near left. The turnips were planted in rows possibly two feet apart, the tops reasonably thick, showing variation on account of the richness of the soil as they do in America or anywhere they grow. I was somewhat surprised that the only dog we had was a thick-coated black retriever.

We covered the field by advancing with about fifteen yards between us, Campbell on my right and Morrison on my left. They did not

carry guns, but each carried a stick, and Morrison was further decorated by a great net game bag swung from his shoulder. We made one course through the first field and then back, my finger upon the trigger and my pulses leaping as I waited for the startling whir-r-r which would mark the breaking of my initial partridge.

But neither this turn nor the next uncovered birds. We swung into another field and took a circuit there without finding game. In a third, while beginning to believe the birds had all migrated, one got out as hurriedly as a quail, between Campbell and myself, and whipped around behind us almost too quickly to be believed. The startled shot which I fired at it was a miss. But at any rate, I had seen my first Scotch partridge and now felt sure of the existence of such birds.

The warmer, softer airs seemed more suited to the lowlands and by contrast with the fiercer blasts of the heights they were not unpleasant. I got a great deal less pleasure out of bird shooting than the pursuit of the stag, but actually more thrills. The partridges are grayish brown birds, smaller than a prairie chicken or grouse, and considerably larger than a bob-white quail. Solid gray upon the breast, and brown and slate gray upon the back.

They broke cover very quickly, flew at high speed, but not always in straight lines as the bob-white does. They are fond of taking to the air with a whirling turn which made shooting them very interesting, particularly when there was a good wind blowing.

After the first or second time of flushing, they lie close, the greater part of them getting up within twenty yards of the gun. Even at that I am willing to subscribe to a statement that it is possible to miss one occasionally.

Campbell and Morrison and I, the three of us abreast, covered turnip field after turnip field with clock-like regularity. At the end of a row, the man at the unbeaten side would pull up a turnip and drop it to mark the edge of the through just finished. From this we moved over the necessary distance and thus covered the fields without leaving any place actually untouched.

Birds were plentiful enough to make good sport. At one o'clock, when I sat down in the shelter of a hedge for luncheon, I felt that I had been having a good day, and turning from refreshment to labor again after I had disposed of the delicacies which fell to my share,

I found Morrison laying the birds out in front of me upon the ground until he had counted twelve brace.

In the afternoon we went on in the same way until about four o'clock, when, the motor having come for us again, we started back to the Castle. I think I shot less well in the afternoon than in the morning. I know I saw fewer birds. I had, though, I remember, sixteen and a half brace of partridges and two rabbits and a jacksnipe, for a total bag.

The next day I was to have some mixed shooting near the Castle. Campbell again directed me and at my request this time he carried a gun. We picked up another keeper and took a turnip field quite close to the home place. In fact, just through a wood and across a small stream from it.

Here the first bird to get out of his comfortable hiding place among the green plants was a pheasant. A royal pheasant of England. Just that same bird which on the Pacific Coast of America is called the "Mongolian." He is the ring-necked Chinese pheasant, of gorgeous plumage if a cock, and of brown modest tones if a hen. The tail is long and the bird seems clumsy, but its capacity for flight is astonishing after it gets under way. It rises rather slowly and makes an easy mark when walked up, as I found on this my first experience with the Mongolian in Scotland.

I had shot him in Oregon and in Washington and he seemed like an old friend. Later on, as I shall say, I had an opportunity to try the pheasant out as a driven bird and I assure you the proposition was an entirely different one. However, that must wait its turn for the telling.

I lunched today on a sloping bank, perfectly sheltered from the wind, while the sun shone down with a gentle warmth almost like that of summer. In front of me, as I sat, a pleasant meadow, brown with autumn's hues, stretched away to a wood which wrapped a little river round, itself burned red and brown and yellow by the piercing nip of early frost. Beyond the river the wood rose gradually with the hill, but not too high or too quickly to rob the scene of its softness.

A lonesome curlew, seeking God knows what solace from his solitary activities, flew high in the air along the course of the stream, punctuating his progress with characteristic cries. Gone, he seemed, and out of our world, when back he came again, only to turn and pass and repass.

I enjoyed the sight and sound of him, but it seemed a pity not to accept his invitation for a shot. I went down to the stream's side and planted myself where he must inevitably fly directly over my head if he for one time more made the trip over the familiar course from which he had not veered a yard in a dozen rounds.

But he came not here again. Wise bird, or else an unreal one. Yet he was rather too tangible for a phantom. The sound of his voice would have convinced almost anyone of his corporeal capacity, so it must have been his superb intelligence which deprived me of a chance to write "curlew" after pheasant, partridge, hare, rabbit; words which figured in a description of this day's bag.

The great variety of shooting for this day made the sport engaging. After the turnip field and the collection there of sixteen pheasants and a partridge, I sat under the lee of a hill not over fifty feet high and waited while the underkeeper went around to drive birds in my direction. Campbell was to my right, further on. I could not see much in my front, but there was clear space behind me.

I got the first shot, a hen pheasant coming like the wind. I threw up my gun with the old instinctive motion so often used in shooting at ducks, and had the satisfaction of seeing my bird crumple in the air and fall quite dead. Not much later a magnificent cock broke cover in Campbell's front. He was moving mightily for the woods in the head keeper's rear and he reached them, too, because the two barrels sounding below him passed as a salute rather than an assault.

Campbell is a good shot, too, but a hurrying pheasant seen only when he is squarely over you and in full flight is no easy mark. I was rather complacent as I thought of my dead bird and Campbell's two misses, and the self-satisfactory feeling was only a little disturbed when a cock broke rather quietly on my left and I slam-banged two charges from the automatic at him without even quickening his wing motion.

I observed to myself that that sort of thing just had to happen occasionally. I know now what it was. I would have been able to say then, had I thought very seriously about it. My old fault of aiming at the birds as if I were shooting a rifle.

When a man using a shotgun at a moving object undertakes to use special care he just naturally falls into the error of shooting directly at the bird. Or if he does hold in front he so often stops

the moving muzzle when he pulls the trigger. A self evident fact, you say. Well, I admit it. Stupid of a man to do it. I agree. But just the same I find it not such an easy fault to avoid.

I did the same thing a few minutes later when in response to instructions from Campbell I was moving along the edge of a hill when another fine cock broke above me and sailed on to the trees, untouched by my two charges intended for him.

You can imagine by this time I was somewhat earnestly bent upon killing the next bird, and in view of that fact it might be well to describe the next bird's doings. We climbed the hill and on the level above us saw a cottage, marked off from us by a stone wall. Over the stone wall I could see turnip tops.

The keeper found spots for Campbell and I where we waited, while he went into the turnips, to beat out what might be there. He commenced at the far side and he had scarcely started when a golden brown hen pheasant flushed in front of us and came actually sizzling down half a yard high between Campbell's stand and mine.

I waited for him and he waited for me until she had passed us both, then each of us, with the same impulse, slammed two loads at her without avail. I excused myself for that, saying it was not quite a fair shot, because I waited for Campbell, and then I was flurried when I did fire.

But hear now about the next bird. This was a grand old cock. He came like a meteorite, fairly burning up the air, and he looked as big as a turkey. Plenty of time; I saw him a hundred yards away from me as he came, and then missed him; blam-blam-blam! Three shots from the automatic, every one behind him. Honestly I felt like taking the gun by the muzzle and breaking it over the stone wall.

You've all been there, unless you are in that never-miss class which gets no real pleasure out of shooting anyhow.

After this, in a few moments, two cocks flushed about the same time, and flew toward me, one to come directly over my head, the other to my right front, the side away from Campbell. As if I had never missed a bird in my life, I swung first upon the one overhead and then the one to my right, and they hit the ground, dead birds, not three seconds apart.

With as much airy nonchalance as I could muster at the moment, I looked over at Campbell, as I carelessly slipped two more shells in the magazine.

Then there were three more single birds coming, all hard crossing ones, all going like the wind and all to fall dead at the shot.

That is what makes shooting an enthralling sport for me. Uncertainty. If I could always hit I would always sit—at home, and never go shooting. Because I *can* miss, because I *do* miss with such ridiculous ease, is what makes hitting seem worth while.

We swung around by mid-afternoon to near where the Chief was overlooking some work his men were doing in sodding the parapet of the dam. The bag was satisfactory. I have forgotten just how many birds, but enough, and the exercise had been sufficient to make a warm bath and clean clothes not unwelcome.

CHAPTER XV.

NORFOLK PARTRIDGES.

THE Chief has some partridge shooting in Norfolk. He has a sort of sharing arrangement with a friend there by which they shoot upon each other's ground. We were going down, he and I, to try the Norfolk partridges. Englishmen will tell you that Norfolk is the best partridge country in England.

We traveled from shortly after midday until night to get an express and then made an all-night journey to reach King's Lynn. From there a waiting motor took us to Compton Hall, where the other man and his friends, all Indians, were already assembled.

Indians? Oh, not native Americans, of course not. Nor natives of the land by India's Coral Strand. No; I mean by that Anglo-Indians; Englishmen who had been in British India as civil service employes of the Government there. A Governor, a Chief Excise Officer, a Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Financial Official, a Judge and one youngster, the son of one of the elders of the party, a subaltern in a native regiment, then on duty upon the Afghan Frontier, his leave terminating so soon that he would have to start for his station at the end of this shoot.

I believe anyone would agree with me that the English gentleman is a fine type of man, and I believe there would be little disagreement that the Anglo-Indian is the best type of Englishman. Big and broad, and straight and strong, he is a man for any country to be proud of, and a companion whose company is to be sought.

Most of them have had their try at big game; tigers, Indian buffalo, large and dangerous game of numerous kinds, and they have traveled enough, seen enough, done enough, and been enough, to have reached a fixed and satisfactory valuation of themselves and the other men and things in the world.

Good men to know, these, extremely interesting and not the least so when in the evenings after dinner before the grate fire one could get them in competition with each other, firing tremendous charges from old-fashioned expresses, at well remembered dangerous beasts which they saw plainly enough and you could *almost* see through the low hanging savoury murk of the tobacco smoke.

We had very little changing to do this first morning at Compton Hall because we had dressed in the sleeping compartment for the field. While we breakfasted the others went on that the schedule might not be broken; we to follow in another motor as we could.

Norfolk, at the place where we were shooting, comes very close to the sea. Not over five miles from there to salt water, though we were out of sight of it. For the most part, the country was quite level. Beautiful, smooth roads like the best city streets ran between well-kept hedges or alongside stone walls or park fences of sheep- and deer-tight wire. Old country places, ivy clad churches, the sights and sounds and scenes and smells of prosperous English farming lies on every side.

As we motored nearer to where the guns were sounding I began to realize that I had very little definite idea of what a partridge drive might actually be like. I had read, of course, as we all have, but having no local knowledge or particular reason to remember I had forgotten.

I had a general impression, shared no doubt by many of my countrymen, that the way Englishmen and Scotchmen shot partridges and pheasants and other game was something scandalous; sort of bird murder, as it were, where the creature had no chance, and the man—too lazy or unskilful to walk his birds up and shoot them like a gentleman—stood at his ease, or sat comfortably in a pleasant place and butchered them by the barrel as they blundered into his vicinity.

Now this shall be the telling of the true status of partridge driving, a typical case, as I believe.

We found the other motor standing at a crossroad and descended to be met by two loaders, that is, men to carry our second guns and to load them. This seemed ominous to me, but I was prepared to go through the ordeal once, even though it did smirch my character as a sportsman. I revised my opinion later as you shall see.

Pegrim, a trim-built, intelligent young Englishman of twenty-five or so, fell to my lot, while a heavy, round-bodied, gray-bearded Britisher, "'oo 'ad been loader for Lord C—, sir—" fell to the Chief.

I had the better of this, because my man quite quickly mastered the intricacies of the Remington auto-loading shotguns which were my weapons, although he had never seen them before, and quite as quickly he acquired the utmost facility in being where I wanted him with the gun ready for my hand. My friend suffered not a little because his garrulous old loader had notions of his own about the shooting; notions which unfortunately neither corresponded to those of his principal nor to the best usage as anyone would see it.

The guns were apparently stationed ahead of us down the lane, and we started toward them. We could see upon the slope which came down from the right to the road—a slope partly covered with stubble and the other part made up of plowed ground—a line of men, twenty or thirty yards apart, as it were, a widely dispersed skirmish line, advancing toward the hedge which marked that flank of the lane to our right.

As we were getting on, a bird flashed through the air to our front and swung out to the left with great quickness, but it was not sufficiently quick to avoid a shot from the Chief's gun which brought it down dead. A second and a third he killed in a similar manner. They were birds breaking out from beyond the flank of the waiting sportsmen. I had not loaded my gun and did not fire.

By now we reached the rest of the party, to be designated, so far as shooting men are concerned, hereafter as always under such circumstances, "the guns." There were eight guns; therefore, eight loaders. My companions were all using double guns, as I should myself if I were not doing my shooting with one hand. The automatic does cut down the effect of the recoil.

The eight guns of us were numbered off from right to left. One, two, three, up to eight. The position of each gun was indicated by the man in charge of the day's shooting. Usually we were about forty to fifty yards apart, for the most part in a line and either behind a hedge or a shoulder of the ground.

In the first assignment of positions I was Number Eight, that is the left flank man. We were facing east, a hedge in our front, then a road, then another hedge, then a great wide field; turnips in first, stubble beyond; on the far side, almost a mile away, the beaters to be seen strung out, about twenty of them.

To my left, the Indian financial man, our Norfolk host, and in charge of the shoot; the others all to his left. Just a little to the right of my front in the hedge was a good sized beech tree, but I could not help that. I had been stationed there, could not leave and it was beyond my power to move the tree.

My loader stood close up to my left rear. His instructions were to keep an automatic in his hand loaded, with the safety off, and the muzzle of the gun pointed up, if I reached back at any time my hand would be expected to hold a gun to be grasped by his disengaged hand, while he reached me forward the loaded one at the same time.

Now we could see the beaters moving toward us, and some of them were making noises by calling out or beating upon the ground with their sticks. Somewhere to the left of the line I heard "Mark Front!" and then bang-bang-bang-bang! I caught a glimpse of brown hurtling shapes, saw two of them tumbling and I was conscious that I had seen my first driven covey of partridges over the guns.

I wondered if I could hit one bird out of such a lot even from my secure stand and with my two automatics. I was soon to find out, for the low voice of my loader warned me "here they come, for you, sir, in front!" I just had time to sense the movement of what looked like very high velocity, slightly elongated, cannon balls sizzling by to my left front.

To save my life I could not find one of the birds in front of me. I had to swing 'round as they passed to my rear, then I did get two shots off, one of them from a satisfactory holding and the other a wild smash at a bird disappearing over a little rise of ground. The first shell had killed, the second had missed.

My suspicion that shooting driven partridges was not a royal road to murder grew stronger from this moment. A little later another covey came by. This time I got in three shots, but only one bird stayed behind. Evidence was accumulating that the gentleman sportsman of America who walks birds up and kills them over his dogs, consciously superior to his English cousin's brutal hoggishness, has perhaps slightly misjudged the case.

The guns were crashing down the line, but I had my own troubles. At the end of the drive or when the beaters had come down to the hedge in front of us, I had killed four birds and wounded a fifth

and I had fired twenty shells. It was a plain case of "here they come and there they go!"

When the birds got to me they had been upon the wing any distance from two hundred to a thousand yards and they were not wildly beating the air the while remaining almost stationary as they do when freshly flushed. They were moving at a high rate of speed and their dodgings and their turnings added to the handicap placed upon one by being close to a hedge or some other object obstructing the view close to the front, made shooting them good sport and hard.

Later on in the day in various drives the original impression borne in upon me was strengthened and intensified until I came to know from my own experience that it was at least fifty per cent more difficult for me to shoot driven partridges than to kill the same bird walked up in the ordinary fashion.

It is true the Englishmen do get great bags. On the other hand, they are not shooting wild game. The birds which fall to their guns are their own, nursed and tended and carefully raised. These men are willing to pay and do pay startling sums for good shooting. Scarcely a bird, I have been told on many occasions, costs the owner less than a pound.

Five dollars a bird. Very often the cost is less, but the men who own these shootings and get their sport in firing at birds upon them, increase the number of birds that they may have something to shoot. They do not take away from other sportsmen upon unpreserved ground any of their rights, and in fact the game which escapes from preserves helps to people the free ground.

One might have some quarrel with Englishmen for shooting so many birds in a day, but I suspect the apparent cause for such criticism as might lie, would quickly disappear if one were to meet the conditions on the ground.

I am quite sure that I did not find Englishmen or Scotchmen or Irishmen less inclined to be fair about shooting than my American brothers. In fact, I have seen much more game hoggishness exhibited in America than I saw in England or Scotland.

During some of the drives of partridges, hare and rabbits were much in evidence. We shot these when we could.

We were not giving all our attention to partridges. There was one fine long stretch of wood, three-quarters of a mile from end to end, and forty yards through which, intelligently beaten, turned out at least two hundred pheasants. We did not kill them all.

Where the guns were out some distance from the trees the birds came over from forty to sixty yards high. They took a lot of stopping, two and three barrels, all hits, were sometimes necessary to bring down a bird, and then very frequently he was a runner. For these the retrievers, two or three being held in leash by the beaters, quickly demonstrated their usefulness.

I recall one cock pheasant which did a most extraordinary stunt. He broke cover and for some reason, quite obscure, swung around at the right flank of the line and started for number one. He received the salute from this gun, three barrels. It is true he was high, fifty yards.

Instead of turning then, and making good his escape he came on directly over number two, who fired in turn. Then the bird to number three, four, five, six and seven, until at eight, who happened to be the chief, the bird came down. For myself I think it was sheer weight of shot. He was so full of shot he could not fly any further.

Perhaps I did not say, although I should, that after each beat the guns gave way two places to the left. Here, as at most shoots, a drawing for places marked the beginning of a day's sport. Thereafter the guns held their numbers as they were gained by giving way after each beat.

With the eight guns we gave way two, subsequently with other numbers of guns in the line, we gave way one place, and sometimes two. On the first day at Norfolk for instance I began as number eight, and then passed at the next beat to number two.

Returning to those high pheasants which were rocketing out of the west woods in grand style and giving us all the shooting anyone could possibly want; I told you of the one which traveled from one end of the line to the other, from the right end to the left, drawing the fire of all until he fell at the end of the line. But I have not told you about an experience near this same wood which caused me considerable misery at the time and threatened for a moment to take away all pleasure from my shooting.

This same long line of trees was beaten out again toward the end of the day, when in a circuit we came back to the vicinity. I recall that I was on the immediate right margin, the beaters stretching straight through the wood coming on a little to my left; other guns to the left of the trees, Judge W—— thirty yards to my front and thirty yards to my right, to pick up such wild birds as should break ahead of the line.

A hen pheasant flushed immediately in front of me and started over the trees to the left. I fired when she was possibly forty feet in the air and twenty-five yards to my left front. She fell in front of the line of beaters where I knew she would be picked up.

An exclamation from my loader caused me to look toward the Judge. He had his hand to his face and I thought I saw blood coming from beneath it. I went quickly to him and found that a single pellet had struck his cheek just below the eye and evidently severed a small artery, as the blood was flowing very freely. He had picked the shot out with his finger nail.

I was naturally very greatly concerned, and asked if I had shot him; he answered "Yes, but it is not your fault. I saw where you fired and you killed your bird. You were not shooting toward me at all." In a genuinely sportsmanlike way he made me feel instantly that he held me blameless, but I could not quite feel myself so until I had gone back to look over the ground.

What I found very greately astonished me. The man I had hit occupied a position almost at right angles, just a little less than a right angle to the line of my fire. In direct line with the path of the charge of shot from my gun was a large oak tree. On its stem were marks of shot, high up.

No other explanation could be made than that from this hard tree, one shot at least, the one which hit the Judge, had ricocheted at an apparently impossible angle and penetrated his cheek.

Our lunch was a jolly function this day, taken in an old fashioned country house, presided over by the farmer who owned the farm upon which it stood, and leased it to form with other holdings the shooting ground where we were taking our sport. When we came to go down to the motors for the homeward drive I found myself quite willing to suspend operations. We had moved about a great deal from one stand to another and the rest provided by the ride home was a pleasant thing to contemplate and enjoy.

We were whisked over the six miles or so in no time at all. What a blessing, a boon, and a convenience a motor is! How did we ever get along without them? I remember very plainly how hard it was to get along *with* them when they first arrived.

The lights were burning cheerfully in the old hall as we swept up the drive and tea and muffins helped to fill the gap from dark to the eight o'clock dinner.

CHAPTER XVI.

SKY-SCRAPING PHEASANTS.

WE began the next morning's activities by a most engaging passage at arms with some A.-No. 1 top-lofty pheasants. The line of guns was extended upon a rolling hillside with a clear view to another wood-crowned hill distant about half a mile. It was this wood the beaters entered first and from it came grand high birds that fell like Lucifer when they were hit.

Everything was plain and open. You could see the bird break from cover, sometimes with excited clucking noises; then you could clearly observe him drawing rapidly near. The question whether the shot would be yours or that of a man somewhere along the line was next to be decided. If the bird came nearer to you than anyone else you "Up Gun, And At Him," when he was within range.

The partridge shooting was not so good this day as the one before, largely because the driving was not so well done, different game keepers were in charge, but it was a fine day's sport and I had one encounter in the afternoon after our luncheon—taken in the root shed of another farm—which was as tidy a tight little corner as anybody ever saw.

A slim wood, tall and narrow, half a mile long and forty yards wide, ran along a gentle slope downward to plowed ground. The plowed ground continued in slope; seventy-five yards from the lower and wider corner of this wood was another larger wood.

The good-natured dispenser of shooting stations put me in the angle between these two woods. Nothing which came out came my way until the very last part of the beat, when in a few minutes—oh, say about two minutes, very full ones altogether—the air seemed full of pheasants.

I rattled my two automatics for all they were worth and was glad when I got through with it to realize that I had done better shooting

under the stress of the rush and hurry than I would ordinarily do if I had plenty of time. They picked up eighteen pheasants and one partridge, and a rabbit, in front of me. Where the partridge came from I do not know; he could not have been in the woods, but he started by. I remember seeing him swing in front of me, and I thought as I pulled, that he was too small for a pheasant. Anyway, I got him with the others.

As far as the rabbit was concerned, of course, rabbits or hares are liable to pop out anytime. The only difficulty they spelled to me was that I was often afraid to shoot at them for fear of hitting a beater or some of the other guns, and when I did shoot at them I was very likely to miss. I did better as the days went by.

The hares are great big fellows, tremendously heavy, rangy brutes. They are much esteemed by the people of the country for use upon the table.

Of course, as all the game is sold, the beaters are well pleased to see large bags made, and because in many cases their compensation depends upon the number of head of game killed. When I say the game is all sold, of course I mean such game as men do not care to take for their own use or give to their friends.

I remember standing at a gate where two hedges would have joined at right angles, but for this break, and having a lively little set-to with what almost seemed like a flock of hares. I just had a little narrow patch of ground visible in front of my gun and into this within two minutes there appeared several hares. When the beat was over, there were seven of the big fellows lying almost one on top of the other.

Our bags in Norfolk I do not remember. I have the record of them somewhere, but I know approximately what we got. Something like 140 brace of partridges, eighty or ninety of pheasants and a little less than a hundred hares and rabbits on the first day.

Not so many partridges nor hares but more pheasants on the second; and on the third day, which came after a Sunday of pleasant rest, spent mostly indoors, for a rain fell, we ran the partridge score up and did practically nothing in pheasants.

Monday's shoot was not materially different from the others. Some features of it perhaps were characteristic. I recall one stand where

the left flank guns were placed with their backs to a village, their faces to a hedge, which lay along the road with a hedge on either side, and turnip fields beyond. The beaters came from the far side of the turnip field and the way those birds would whip over the hedges and so close to the houses that one could not fire was a caution.

Astonishing how rapidly these little partridges could move after the start they got by breaking cover a hundred yards or more from the guns, and it was still more astonishing to see the way those Englishmen and Scotchmen handled their two double-barreled guns.

They actually would get four shots off so quickly that the sound was like that made by four shots from an automatic. There are English shots so expert that they can get in six shots and kill six birds out of a driven covey of partridges. That seems incredible, but I am assured by men whose veracity is unimpeachable that it has been done and that those who told me have seen it done.

For my part, I saw some of these men kill four partridges out of a covey. Doing my very best and trying the most I could, the best I ever did, compass was three. One in front and two behind. A successful Englishman on a quartet of birds will get two in front and two behind. They certainly are fast birds as anyone will acknowledge who has tried them.

We lunched on the third day of Norfolk shooting on the sweet turf near a big wood, and just before dark the Chief and I hustled into a motor and started on a fifty-two mile journey to the nearest point at which we could intercept the Scotch express.

Our lights were not very good and our head light was truly shockingly inefficient. We got off the road once or twice and we had the usual experiences incident to night travel in a strange country, but we did not turn turtle and we were in a land where every man was willing to give information about the roads if he had it, so we finally drew into our station in plenty of time for a good, comfortable, leisurely dinner before the night train took us up for Scotland.

A friend of mine told me since I came back to this country of a thing which struck him while motoring in England. He said in some thousands of miles of such travel he never found a single constable or policeman who did not know the way to any place he was asked about. Besides, it seemed to come straight off the bat, as if he had been

standing waiting until you came to tell you the way to go to the place you desired to reach.

My friend remarked that the average countryman was different, in that he almost invariably said "Stryte on" when you offered him the query, "Which way to Blank?" My experience was the same in every particular. That "stryte on" threw us off the track in our night run, because of a detour of several miles, more than once. It meant in a general straight direction, but it left out of consideration all small turns or curves from the straight roads.

Back to Balnagown again we had a part of one day and all of another to write letters and overhaul our affairs generally, before the three great culminating shooting days arrived.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUCKS AT LAST.

AS I approach the task of telling about the Balnagown shooting I am wondering how I can best make you realize what I felt about it. How perfect it all was. It was so novel, it gave me such a number of different sensations, so many of them new.

I was able to fire hundreds of shots from my shotguns in a day without even a slight feeling that I was taking shooting from some one else, and the companionship offered me by my host,—whose lady wife had departed to leave us a Bachelor's Hall,—and his three Scotch friends, completed a scenario, a caste and scenery incomparable.

The three Scotch baronets and the other charming Scotch gentleman without title, who were to make up the five guns for this three days' shoot were as delightful men as one could encounter in many days' travel. They had knocked about more or less all over the world. Their views were interesting to me because they had varying and different viewpoints. They were perfect sportsmen and marvelously good shots.

They told me nine o'clock was the hour for our first day to begin and, looking at my watch as I stepped out of the front door, I saw it read two minutes scant of that hour. Beyond the round, gray, ivy-swathed tower on the right the loaders, alert and expectant, were waiting for their principals to come out. Hands to caps, they gave me a pleasant "Good morning, Sir."

I was the first of the guns on the ground. Campbell, head-keeper, came soon, and shortly after, the other four. Then we made over to where I was told we would have a "bit" of rabbit shooting. This rabbit shooting was extra-special, as I found out later.

Campbell had a way with him when it came to rabbits, his notion being that you ought to concentrate as much rabbit shooting in as little space of time and ground as you could possibly manage.

Now these rabbits, of course, normally, live in holes or burrows in the ground for the greater part. Campbell offered them a nice lunch of that particular kind of food of which they were most fond, late in the evening, and then when the bunnies were out feeding, he had a force of men stop all the burrows. To begin with he had put a rabbit-tight fence around the warren, and built piles of brush, one or two feet high, perhaps four feet square, at intervals of ten or fifteen feet all over the tract. This was a woods-grown enclosure; high trees and many of them.

When it came to the shooting the guns were distributed about twenty-five yards apart with three or four beaters between each one, and, of course, a loader for every gun was behind his principal. Then at a signal, the beaters moving on a line with all, lifted up the little heaps of brush with their sticks.

The conventional result under such circumstances was the popping out of one, two, three or perhaps four rabbits and the quick departure of the little brown fellows for what they fondly imagined was a place of safety in front. Then the guns commenced to talk.

The line moved forward slowly and the rabbits kept getting up. It really did seem impossible that ten guns could fire as rapidly as these did. I know my two automatics got hot, and it is a hard thing to get an automatic well warmed up.

Before the line got clear through to the other end of the wood it stopped and faced about. All the rabbits which had gone on were then in its rear. The beaters slipped off to one side and came in from behind. The result was that we had rabbits running from behind us to our new front, and by the time they got to the danger zone they were usually in full career.

When a charge of shot struck one of the little speeding fellows he would go end over end before coming to a stop. I'm not ashamed to tell it, but the Scotchmen beat me all to pieces shooting rabbits. They rarely ever missed. I found it easy enough to shoot at the wrong time or place.

When the rabbit fire was over we strung out of the wood and lined up, beaters and guns, to cross some rough ground toward what I was told would be the lake position for shooting ducks. As we went a

pheasant would break cover there, or a rabbit yonder; a pigeon might swing over; a snipe flush in front. Whatever got up within range received its tribute of shot and usually went to swell the bag.

Come to the lake, I found it a body of water about five hundred yards long and not over two hundred yards across at the widest point. Pine and fir trees stood upon the north end and east side of it. The other shores were broken ground, showing only an occasional tree. To the north of us the hill rose up to an approximate height of 200 feet, attaining this level at a distance of a half mile or so from the water's edge.

The guns were assigned number one, two, three, four, five, and then Albert, who accompanied the Chief, raised a small brass trumpet he carried and sounded a shrill, unmusical note. This was answered from over the crest to the northeast by three short blasts from a similar horn.

In direct response to the signal and its answer, I caught a movement on the part of my loader, as he said in excited accents: "There they come There they come!"

Over the tops of the trees, straight from the place where I had heard the answering horn, swiftly hurtling to their home lake, came five big mallards. Flying high, they were, and though unconscious of danger, apparently disposed to settle in the lower part of the lake, while the guns were disposed around the upper. In fact, two of the guns were on the upper right hand side, one in a boat in the middle of the lake, while the last two, numbers four and five, were opposite one and two on the left upper side of the lake, as you looked up it.

The mallards came straight on for the center of the lake, about forty yards above the water. They passed a little to one side of number three in the boat, to receive his salute. He killed one and wounded another. They swung over me, who was number four, climbing, and twisting to get away. I took the wounded one and another. One hit the water, the other the shore, with a splash and a whop. The unwounded two swung around the lake and came over once more, this time fifty yards or more above the guns which eagerly reached for them. How many shots were fired on that round I cannot tell, but whatever the number, the result was satisfactory, because the two birds were soon down.

Scarcely had the five been disposed of until here came three. They met the fate of their preceding brethren and were followed in turn by four. Then a lone duck. Then five again, and five and four. So on for fifteen minutes. Then Albert's horn blew, calling forth its answer from the hill. The flight ceased and the guns changed position, number one becoming number two, that is all giving way from right to left one down. It was hot and heavy while it lasted. Our instructions were not to wait for the other man in this kind of shooting, but to fire at our own discretion when a bird was in range.

What happened during the first period was repeated in the second, and done over in the third. All of the glamour and charm and seductive allure of pass shooting was present in this form of sport. I could not shake off the feeling that the ducks would stop coming, that every one I saw headed toward the lake was the last one. But they kept on and on and on and on until we stopped for luncheon.

Allen, the butler from the Castle, and his troop of footman satellites, had set up trestles and laid a damask-draped table in the open ground, roofed only by the gray sky. Here the five hungry sportsmen sat down to a piping hot array of luscious viands, which completed by some rare old Port and an exceptional quality Havana left us in almost too good humor to care for more shooting.

However, I did not notice anybody flunking a shot when we were back on the lake and the ducks had recommenced their descent upon us. There was no change in the general program, but those of you who have shot ducks will know that there was that infinite variety which duck-shooting only can give.

Every one was different from the one which preceded it. This one was high, sixty yards and straight over you; that at a less altitude was passing swiftly to your right; this was circling and climbing in your rear; the other dipping toward the surface of the lake; the next rising straight up with frantically beating wings.

At four o'clock the horn blew from the hilltop a prolonged blast as a token that the last duck had taken wing. There were a few cripples to pick up, but only a few, because fifteen or twenty gillies had been about the lake all day, gathering from shore and boat the dead and wounded ducks. When the bag was laid out upon the shore for counting in lines of twenty-five we found an even 650. A few more were picked up later.

And now you will want to know how all this was possible. You will be wondering where the ducks came from and how it came about that just when we wanted them they were coming to us. This is the way of it: The Chief buys mallard eggs to add to the store he acquires from the setting of his own ducks. These eggs are put under hens, and the ducklings hatched out are placed in one of three different ponds or lakes upon the estate.

They are fed night and morning, at a point distant about half a mile from the home waters. As little fellows, they are, of course, fed fully. As they grow old enough to walk well and fly they are gradually coaxed further and further up the hill until at last they reach the full distance.

Here, after a time, they are quickly taught to fly back, after the morning and evening meal. This becomes a habit with them, and a flight always follows a feeding. Sometimes several wide circuits, but always a return to the home waters. When the time comes to shoot, the large wire netting partial enclosure in which the birds have been feeding is completed while they are within. Then they are released at the signal in lots of from one to five. There you have a description of the machinery which guarantees to the sportsman a shot, or as many shots as he likes, when and where he desires.

Exclusive atttention was devoted the next morning to the pheasants. Those lengthy-tailed fellows are great woods birds. They love to lie up and take hiding in the cover which a forest furnishes. To drive them it is necessary to beat out the woods and brush. The line of beaters, formed very much as in the partridge shooting in Norfolk, on this morning began a forward movement from well beyond the far side of a grove of trees. The five guns were stationed in the stubble under the lee of a hill.

It is rather a trying moment, indeed there are several of them, while one waits for the first shot of a day. Nothing happened on the initial stand to break the serene calm of the early pleasant morning. Not a bird came over. A little later in going to a new stand we walked up some rough ground and killed a few pheasants as they flushed in front. but it was not until the third drive that things began to happen. From then on the fun was fast and furious.

I remember one little hot corner with the Chief on number four and I on number five. We were about forty yards apart, stationed between two groves of trees and the birds driven from one had to pass over us on the way to the other. A fold in the hill hid us until the pheasants were very nearly overhead.

They came high and very rapidly, and in large numbers. After about ten minutes' shooting seventy pheasants were picked up in front of us and there was not one easy shot among them. All good, hard-flying birds. Easily twice as difficult to hit as the same birds walked up over a dog.

At luncheon time we had finished the pheasant shooting. We took this meal under some big pine trees and, having disposed of it, repaired without unseemly delay to a little stream which had been the home of a small lot of mallards, about seventy-five. These, when released from a high hill, came to us on swift wings and at a great elevation. Fly as high and as hard as they might the five guns eventually disposed of practically all of them.

Then we repaired to a little green meadow girt round by trees, in the curve of a second stream where we waited the coming up of another lot of ducks. There were three hundred odd of them and they gave us many fine, high sporting shots. We had enough, but only just enough when the horn signaled the news that the last of them had been loosed.

The next and last day of the whole British shooting experience was devoted to a contest with the fast flying qualities and wily ways of the Scotch partridge. We drove in a big automobile in the morning to a point on our host's land some eight miles from the Castle. Here we found Campbell with a long line of beaters waiting for us.

The first field yielded only one small covey and that swung to the side so that it lost but two birds from its ranks. The next beat was rather a strange one. The wind was blowing from the southeast; we were on the east margin of a turnip field; it was expected the birds would go with the wind, so the guns were strung out in Indian file and instructed to advance along the north line of the field, keeping such a pace that the rearmost man would be fifty yards in advance of the line of beaters, who, starting at the east margin of the field, were to come through, sweeping it from the east to west by a line extended from its north to its south boundaries.

The plan worked well enough and we got some birds, but I recall very distinctly a drainage ditch with a barbed wire fence by its side and crossed by another, which interposed during the progress of this advance. Some of the guns were able to swing over by the wires; some made it by a long running jump; but when I approached, eyeing the two feet or more of water with considerable disfavor, partridges were getting up momentarily and coming toward us. I could not delay the line and I had to cross, so I waded in and out, taking two large, capacious hunting boots full of very cold water with me.

After that we swung along in line, guns and beaters together, to a piece of waste land which had been allowed to grow up to high grass. There were many partridges here and some pheasants; but few got away. The percentage of hits of flushed birds as against the percentage of hits made on driven birds works out about the same every time. Very few flushed birds escape. If you get half of the driven birds you are doing well.

There were a great many partridges here. Quite as large a number as I saw in Norfolk. We came finally to a famous old patch of gorse which had been left as a nesting and hiding place for the birds. Here they were in force. We drove this patch with good success, then drove a turnip field not far away and the birds made for the patch, then we drove it again. In all, I think four drives were made through this one small tract of ground, each yielding plentitude of birds.

Then we swung out over the fields further on and pursued the tactics previously described in the Norfolk shooting. That is, the guns were stationed along one side of a field in a covered position and the beaters attempted to put the birds over or near to them. We had a good bag that night; about 300 birds, I think, and motored back to the Castle, satisfied with the sport, if not entirely content as individuals—I speak for myself alone—with the quality of our shooting.

That night the party broke up, and the next morning I started for England and home. So this is the end of my Scotch and English shooting experiences in the year 1911. I have tried to tell of them in such a way as to pass on to you some of the pleasure which they afforded me.

If I have succeeded in doing that I am satisfied, because the pleasure which I had was so great that no one else could have any of it without a distinct addition to the sum total of human happiness. So endeth stories of some shoots or the chronicles of a gratified gunner.

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